SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

A HISTORY OF GAMBLING

Alice Fleming

Gambling is a sport that has never gone out of style. In ancient Rome, people bet on chariot races and the winning numbers were relayed by carrier pigeons. During the eighteenth century, betting fever swept England—Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* is probably based on one of the travel wagers so popular at that time. In the saloons along the American frontier a century later, a bet could easily lead to a gunfight.

Today gambling is big business. From opulent casinos and racetracks to floating dice games, people risk their money, and even go into debt to continue playing. But the odds are always against the gambler. Bookies, numbers runners, loan sharks, and the Mafia all get rich, and society pays in the end. Here, the in-

(continued on back flap)

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THE DIE IS CAST

Human beings bet on everything from backgammon to bullfights. The casinos of Las Vegas and Monte Carlo attract millions of would-be winners each year. National lotteries exist in countries as diverse as Mexico, Japan, and the Soviet Union, and at last count, forty-four of the fifty United States permitted some type of legalized gambling.

Obviously, large numbers of people are willing to risk their money on the outcome of some unpredictable event. This has been true since the beginning of civilization. Gambling was known to the Babylonians, the Etruscans, and the ancient Chinese. It was written about by Homer, Chaucer, and Shakespeare. Even the Bible mentions casting lots.

Flipping a coin and guessing whether two people will extend an odd or an even number of fingers are among the oldest and simplest forms of gambling. The Egyptians had a finger guessing game called *atep*, in which

the participants stood back to back and a third person announced the result.

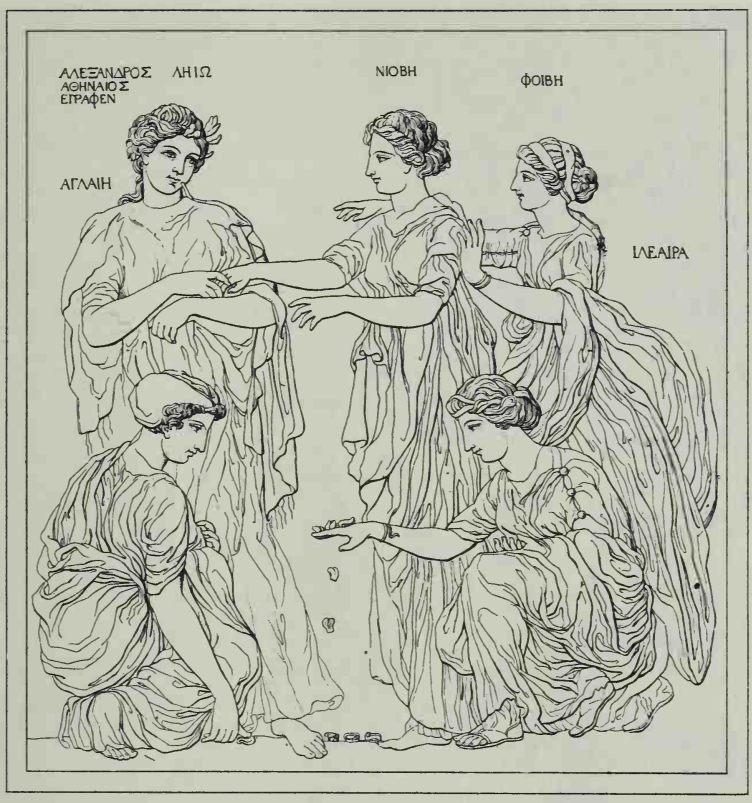
When tossing a coin, the ancient Romans used to call "head or ship" rather than "heads or tails." This was because their coins had the head of the god Janus on one side and a Roman galley on the other. The Greek equivalent was "night and day," because the Greeks tossed shells that were black on one side and white on the other.

More sophisticated forms of gambling developed with the appearance of dice. The Greek historian Herodotus refers to the use of dice several centuries before the birth of Christ in the ancient country of Lydia in Asia Minor. The nation's rulers gave them to the citizens during a famine to take their minds off their hunger. Other writers have claimed that dice were invented during the siege of Troy by soldiers looking for a way to amuse themselves between battles.

The Greek philosopher Plato suggested that a demon named Theuth created dice. Another group of Greeks, who did not share Plato's disapproval, gave the credit to Palamedes, a mythical Greek hero who was also said to have provided the world with weights, measures, and the alphabet.

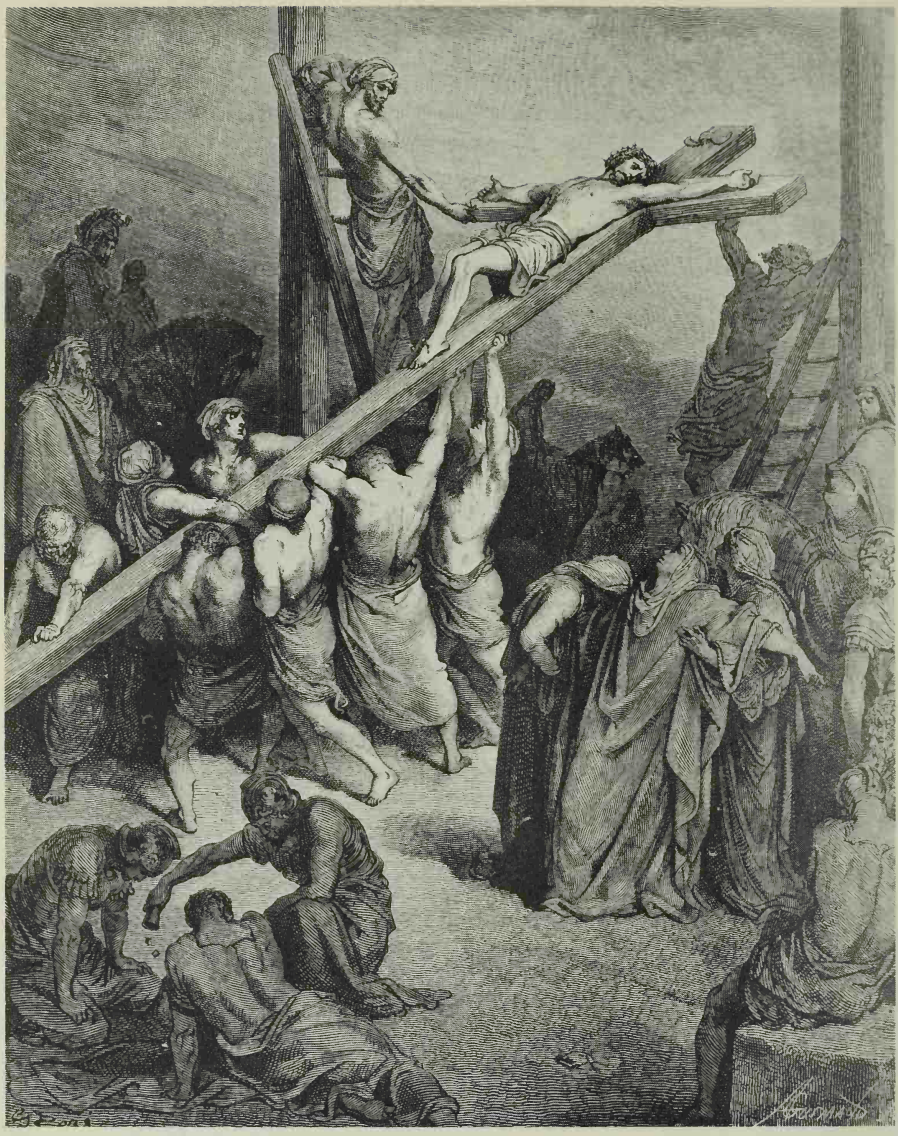
Whatever their origin, it seems fairly certain that dice were not invented at any single time and place by any one person. It seems equally certain that they were first used not for playing games, but for interpreting dreams and predicting the future.

The earliest dice were called astragals or knuckle-



Dice throwers in ancient Greece. These women are tossing astragals, or knucklebones.

bones, and were made from the anklebones of sheep. They were irregularly shaped but it was possible to distinguish four sides, which the ancient players marked with dots. Knucklebones were usually used in pairs and a number of different games could be played with them. In one game the object was to throw the highest number; in another, to throw numbers that added up to fourteen.



Nineteenth-century engraving of the Crucifixion, by Gustave Doré. The Roman soldiers in the foreground are tossing dice, oblivious to the raising of the cross.

Knucklebones continued to be used until the time of the Roman Empire, but by then dice were also being made in other shapes and from other materials. The materials included stone, ivory, wood, amber, and animal or human teeth. Some dice had five or eight sides; others were shaped like pyramids. There was, in addition, the six-sided cube that is used today. Cubical dice have been found in Egyptian tombs dating back to 2000 B.C.

The New Testament says that the Roman soldiers who stood guard at Jesus's cross tossed dice for his garments. The Greek biographer and historian Plutarch, in his *Parallel Lives,* reported that when Julius Caesar made his fateful decision to cross the river Rubicon and lead a civil war against Rome, he said: "The die [singular of dice] is cast."

Plutarch also told a story about dice in ancient Persia. It seems that Queen Parysatis, mother of King Artaxerxes (who reigned around 400 B.C.), was eager to revenge herself on the slave who, on orders from Artaxerxes, had beheaded her younger son, Cyrus. The queen challenged Artaxerxes to a game of dice for a large sum of money. Although she was a skillful player, she contrived to play badly, lost and paid the debt.

Soon after that, the queen insisted on a rematch and announced that this time the stake should be one of Artaxerxes' slaves. The unsuspecting king agreed. Queen Parysatis won and was allowed to choose the slave. She chose her son's killer; when he was delivered to her, she ordered him put to death.

When Artaxerxes tried to intervene, the queen accused him of being a bad loser and reminded him that she had paid her gambling debt without complaint. The king had no choice but to let the slave be killed.

The Roman emperors were fanatic dice players. Nero regularly staked huge sums of money on a single throw of the dice. Caligula got so furious when he lost that he would order innocent citizens executed and seize their property to make up for his losses. Claudius, who liked to play dice when he traveled, had the interior of his carriage designed so that the vehicle's motion would not interfere with his game. Claudius was such an insatiable player that the playwright Seneca depicted him condemned to hell and forced to play at dice for eternity with a bottomless dice cup:

> For whenso'er he shook the box to cast,
> The rattling dice delude his eager haste;
> And when he tried again the waggish bone
> Insensibly was through his fingers gone;
> Still he was throwing, yet he ne'er had thrown.

Roman dice playing was by no means limited to the ruling classes. A series of paintings found in the excavations of Pompeii show a group of men being evicted from a tavern for arguing over a game of dice. Dice playing not only caused arguments, but was also associated with lying, cheating, and drunkenness. The Romans finally banned it except during the Saturnalia, the December festival in honor of the god Saturn. Despite their own excesses, however, the Romans considered themselves models of restraint compared with

the Teutonic tribes. The historian Tacitus reported that the Teutons gambled even without the excuse of being drunk.

The finer aspects of Roman culture—its architecture, literature, and art—disappeared after the fall of the empire in A.D. 476. Dice playing either survived or was rediscovered because it turned up on the crusades some seven centuries later. According to one legend, the game of hazard was devised by English crusaders during the siege of the Arab fortress of Hazart. They may have learned it from the Arabs, since *az-zahr* is the Arabic word for dice.

King Richard the Lion-Hearted, who led the Third Crusade in 1190, had to issue orders restricting games of dice among his troops. Knights and clergymen were forbidden to lose more than twenty shillings in a single day and ordinary soldiers were not allowed to play at all.

Four centuries later, English monarchs were still having problems with dice. King Henry VIII once lost the largest and most famous set of church bells in England—the Jesus bells that hung in the tower of St. Paul's Cathedral—in a game of dice with one of his noblemen.

Dice were being used in America even before the Europeans arrived. Early settlers in what is now upper New York State found the Iroquois Indians playing a game called hubbub, in which they used dice made out of peach stones. Dice matches involving whole towns and sometimes whole tribes were played among the Narragansett Indians of Rhode Island.

Some dice games are so simple that even children can play. This nineteenth-century newspaper engraving shows "a new juvenile vice—children gambling for delicacies."

Further west, the Jesuit explorer Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix found the Hurons playing dice. "At this game they hazard all they possess," he wrote in 1744, "and many do not leave till they are almost stripped quite naked and till they have lost all they have in their cabins. Some have been known to stake their liberty for a time, which fully proves their passion for this game, for there are no men in the world more jealous of their liberty than the savages."

Meanwhile the European passion for dice showed no signs of abating. In 1764 some repairs were made

at the Inns of Court, the complex of buildings that is the headquarters for London's legal profession. When the floors of one structure, the Middle Temple Hall, were ripped up, workmen discovered more than a hundred pairs of dice that had dropped between the floorboards over the years. There is no record of what game the lawyers were playing with these wayward dice, but the chances are good that it was hazard, the same game that had been played on the crusades.

Hazard was widely played throughout Europe in the eighteenth century. A writer of the era, Richard

According to the caption for this 1942 Life Magazine *photograph, "Craps is the dearest love of the average American male gambler, whether civilian or soldier."*

Seymour, called it "the most bewitching game that is played with dice" and went on to say that "when a man begins to play, he knows not when to leave off; and having once accustomed himself to it, he hardly ever after minds anything else."

Certain throws in hazard were known as crabs. In France these were called *creps.* Eventually, crabs, *creps,* or as it is now called, craps, became a separate game and its more complicated ancestor, hazard, disappeared.

Today, an elaborate version of craps, sometimes called bank craps, is played in casinos. It requires a special table and has its own terminology and rules. Private games are simpler and more common. All they require is a pair of dice and a flat surface to play on, although some players put down a blanket to prevent the dice from getting chipped.

The player who tosses a pair of dice may roll thirty-six different combinations of numbers. None will be lower than two or higher than twelve. According to the law of probability—the mathematical formula that predicts the most likely outcome of an event by measuring it against all the other possible outcomes—the two numbers that occur most often on a throw of the dice are seven and eleven. These are called naturals. A player must shoot one or the other to win. If he shoots a two, three, or twelve, he loses. If he shoots another number, that number becomes his "point" and he can continue to shoot until he makes it again.

Craps is not the only modern game in which dice are used. Backgammon and its French version, *tric-*

trac, both require dice. So does chuck-a-luck, or birdcage, a simple game in which three dice are whirled in a metal cage and the players guess which number will come up when it stops. In England, chuck-a-luck was known as sweat-cloth, possibly because the players sweated while the cage whirled. When the game appeared in the United States around 1800, its name was shortened to sweat. The more refined name, chuck-a-luck, was not adopted until some time after the Civil War.

One of the major disasters of American history, the great Chicago fire of 1871, may have started because of dice. The original explanation was that a woman named Mrs. O'Leary was milking her cow one evening when the animal kicked over her lantern and started the blaze. Mrs. O'Leary testified under oath, however, that she had not been in her barn that evening and was in fact asleep in bed.

In 1944 a Chicago businessman, Louis M. Cohn, left a bequest of $35,000 to Northwestern University along with a document purporting to explain the true cause of the fire. Cohn claimed that he, not a cow, had knocked over the lantern in Mrs. O'Leary's barn. He had done it, he said, while shooting craps with some friends. As a possible explanation for his clumsiness he added, "I was winning."

THE DEVIL'S INVENTION

Dice were the main tools of the gambler's trade until, sometime during the fourteenth century, playing cards appeared. There is no evidence that they were intended to be played for money, but they were quickly adapted to that purpose.

The origin of playing cards, like the origin of dice, is a mystery. According to one story they were invented in China during the twelfth century to keep the women of Emperor Seun-Ho's court amused, and were brought to Europe by gypsies who had traveled to the Orient. Another theory is that playing cards are of Arabic origin and were discovered and adopted by Europeans during the crusades. However, the last crusade ended in 1291 and there is no mention of playing cards in any records or documents until almost a century later.

Both Venice and Spain have been cited as the birthplace of playing cards. The Spaniards and the Vene-

tians were insatiable card players, but there is no evidence that they started the craze. All that is really certain is that playing cards appeared in a number of European countries at approximately the same time and their popularity was instantaneous.

The earliest type of cards were tarot cards, which were used to tell fortunes as well as for play. They bore some resemblance to our present-day cards—there were four suits and ten number cards—but they were considerably larger and there were sixty-two, seventy-eight, or sometimes ninety-seven cards in a

German woodcut of gamblers playing cards, 1472.

deck. The seventy-eight-card deck, which was the most common, had four face cards—king, queen, knight, and valet—as well as twenty-one other picture cards with such designations as Death, Justice, the Emperor, and the Pope.

Eventually both the size and number of tarot cards were reduced, and a fifty-two-card deck was adopted. Many of the picture cards were eliminated but the four suits remained. They were identified by colors—red, green, black, and blue—and by pips or suit markings that varied from country to country. Italy and Spain had cups, swords, money, and clubs; Germany and the other northern European countries had hearts, acorns, bells, and leaves.

During the fifteenth century, France became Europe's leading manufacturer of playing cards. To simplify their work, French craftsmen printed the suits in only two colors, red and black. They also dropped the markings that were used in other countries. The French suits, which set the style for all playing cards, represented the four classes of French society. Hearts symbolized the church, which was at the heart of the community; spears, or spades as they came to be called, were the symbol of the army; diamonds represented the merchants, who paved their exchanges with diamond-shaped tiles; and clubs were the emblems of the farmers and peasants. The origin of clubs is not quite clear. One theory is that their clover shape represented the farmers' fields; another is that the peasants, who could not afford swords, used clubs as weapons.

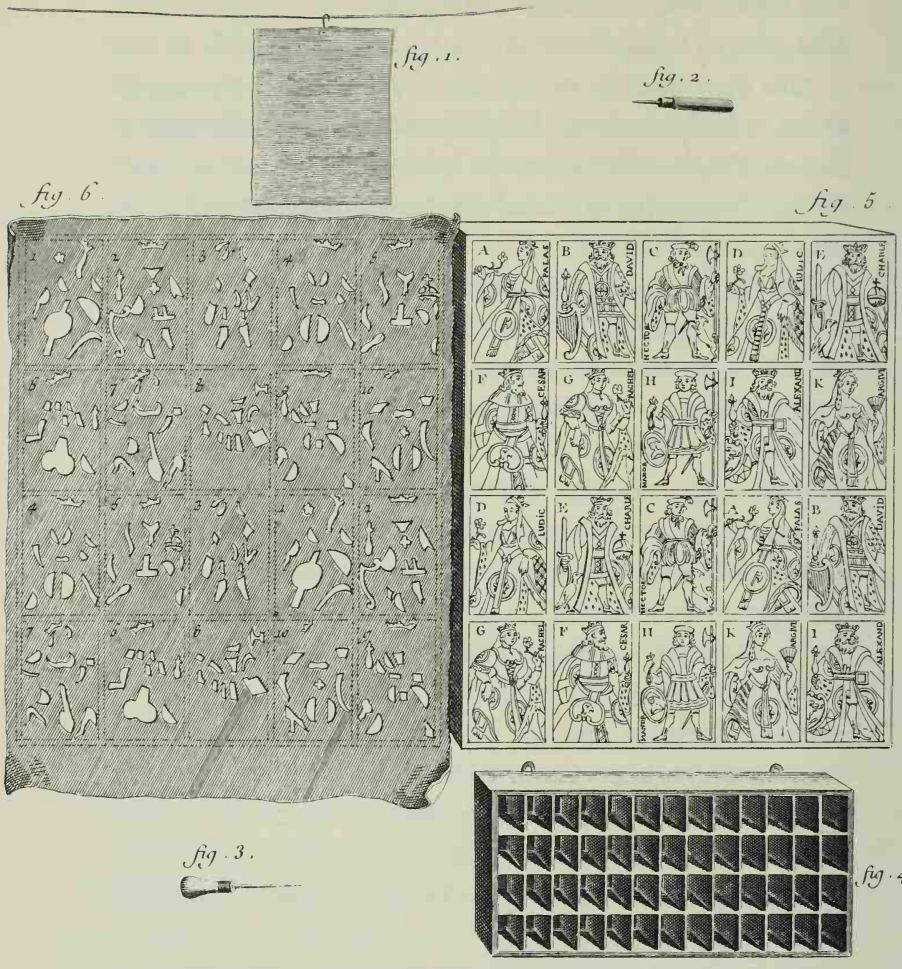
French card makers created uniform designs, while English manufacturers introduced the custom of making cards that could be recognized from either end. If a player was seen turning his cards around, it was a sure sign that he or she had some kings, queens, or jacks, which were the hardest cards to identify upside down. When all the cards looked the same at both ends, there was no need to turn them around, and secrecy was insured.

The English also launched the custom of decorating the ace of spades. During the eighteenth century, the British government levied a tax of one shilling on every deck of playing cards. One card, the ace of spades, was taken to the revenue office and an elaborately engraved tax stamp was affixed to its face. When manufacturers complained that it was too much trouble to separate one card from the deck, the tax stamp was placed on the package that held the cards; but a decoration, not unlike the tax stamp, continued to be put on the ace of spades.

Playing cards were a source of pleasure to their users and profit to their makers, but to many people, particularly employers and clergymen, they were a source of nothing but trouble. Cards encouraged reckless disregard for two very precious commodities: time and money.

As early as 1397 card playing was forbidden in France on working days. In 1423 an Italian monk, St. Bernard of Siena, denounced cards as an invention of the devil.

In England a royal decree issued in 1495 prohibited



This French line engraving shows the equipment used to manufacture cards in the eighteenth century. Colors were applied to the face cards through a series of stencils like the one on the left.

servants and apprentices from playing cards except during the Christmas season, and then only in the presence of their masters. Card playing was also forbidden at court except for the twelve days between Christmas and the feast of the Epiphany (January 6).

If the king was in the mood for gaming at that time, a formal announcement was made that "his majesty is out." All ceremony was set aside and the gambling could begin. When the king grew tired of playing, it was announced that "his majesty is at home," and the usual court etiquette was resumed.

In France, King Henry III, who reigned during the sixteenth century, had special rooms set aside in his palace, the Louvre, for dice and card playing. Henry III was a good-natured gambler who shared his winnings with his fellow players and occasionally even paid their debts. His successor, Henry IV, was not so generous. He flew into rages when he lost and his opponents often played ineptly rather than risk offending their king.

Henry IV was reportedly cured of his passion for cards when he lost an enormous sum of money and had to call on his chief minister, the duc de Sully, to bring him enough cash to pay his debt. Sully arrived with the money and piled it in front of the king. Henry took one look at the mountain of coins he had gambled away and vowed to give up cards forever.

The decision may have saved the royal treasury from further losses but it did not deter the thousands of other Frenchmen who shared the king's fondness for play. During Henry IV's reign Paris swarmed with

gamblers. Public gaming houses called "academies of joy" catered to all classes of society and operated in some of the most fashionable sections of the city. Their owners made fortunes; their patrons, more often than not, lost them. Many were killed when they tried to settle their losses with one final gamble—a duel.

The situation did not improve when an Italian gamester named Pimentello arrived in Paris and set himself up as a banker for gamblers. He issued credit slips so that players could sign for their losses instead of paying in cash. When they gambled away more than they owned, Pimentello advanced them extra money, but he charged outrageous interest on his loans and was ruthless in demanding repayment. He also persuaded the dice dealers of Paris to sell loaded dice—dice that were weighted so they would fall to one side more often than another. This guaranteed him a steady supply of losers, eager to take advantage of his services.

Legend has it that the first playing cards in America were made by Christopher Columbus's crew. The sailors brought cards along on the voyage but when their ships encountered high winds and rough seas, the superstitious seamen decided that the cards were responsible for the treacherous weather and tossed them overboard. Once the sailors reached dry land, they were ready to resume their gambling; they made new cards out of the leather-like leaves of the copas trees they found growing in El Salvador.

European-made cards arrived in Virginia with the English, in Florida with the Spanish, and in New Am-

sterdam with the Dutch. They also found their way into New England but did not receive a very enthusiastic welcome. The Pilgrims imposed fines on adults who were caught playing cards. Children and servants were not fined but their parents or masters were required by law to reprimand them; for a second offense, they were whipped publicly. At Harvard College, students were fined for fighting, cursing, and drunkenness, but the largest fines were imposed on those caught playing cards.

Elsewhere in the colonies, there were many respectable uses for cards. In those days English and American cards had plain white backs which were good for writing invitations to balls and teas. Many people cut their playing cards in quarters and used them as calling cards. In 1765 playing cards were the tickets of admission to classes at the University of Pennsylvania.

Thousands of sets of playing cards were imported into the colonies from England each year. They were among the items taxed by the Stamp Act of 1765, which helped foment the American Revolution. But the tax had no apparent effect on their popularity.

A young woman who visited New York during the Revolutionary era wrote: "All is a dead calm until the cards are introduced, when you see pleasure dancing in the eyes of all the matrons and they seem to gain new life."

One of the favorite games of that era was brag, which was not unlike modern poker. The art of the game was described by one player in 1719 as "the endeavor to impose on the judgment of the rest who

An evening social in 1810. The game being played is brag.

play by boasting of the cards in your hand." Even more popular was all fours, from which the modern games seven-up and cinch are descended.

George Washington was fond of cards and regularly played for money. He was not the only gambler among the Founding Fathers. Thomas Jefferson is supposed to have played post-and-pair, another ancestor of poker, while he was in Philadelphia writing the Declaration of Independence. Benjamin Franklin had several favorite games. One was cribbage, which he played with his wife, Deborah. Another was a version of whist called Boston, which he introduced to the French and which quickly became the rage of Paris.

The games that are played today are almost all descended from earlier games. Both poker and gin

rummy grew out of the fourteenth-century Persian game *as-nas,* although poker probably got its name from the French card game *poque.* Bridge began in the sixteenth century with a game called triumph. It developed into whist, which got its name because players used to silence everyone around them with a "whist!" or "shush!" so they could concentrate on the game.

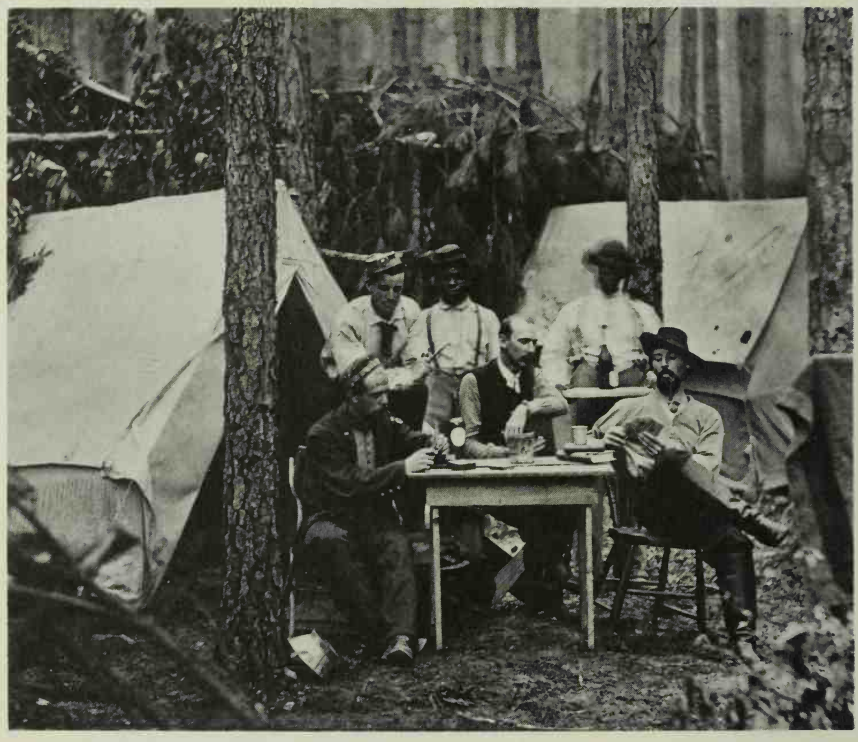
Whist became bridge sometime during the nineteenth century. Its name and some of its rules come from the Russian version of whist, *biritsch.* It was brought to western Europe by travelers who had seen it played by Russian soldiers and diplomats stationed in Turkey during the Crimean War. In 1925 an American millionaire and yachtsman, Harold S. Vanderbilt, revised the rules and created contract bridge, currently the most popular form of the game.

One of the oldest and hardest-to-win card games is now obsolete. It was called faro, because it started in France, where playing cards were decorated with a picture of an Egyptian pharaoh, but it had developed from an earlier banking game called bassett, which was invented in Venice in 1593. Bassett was responsible for so many lost fortunes that its inventor, Pietro Cellini, was banished from the kingdom. King Henry IV refused to allow bassett to be played in France except among the aristocracy. Even they could not sustain its terrible losses and in 1691 Henry's grandson, Louis XIV, outlawed bassett by royal decree.

Faro was a somewhat complicated game, but essentially it involved betting against a dealer or banker on

the order in which certain cards would be drawn from a specially constructed box. In the United States, where the boxes were decorated with tigers, playing faro became known as "bucking the tiger." For years faro was the most popular banking game in the country. Its popularity began to wane around the end of the nineteenth century, but Reno, Nevada, had faro banks until the 1920s.

Today the card games that are commonly played in



Officers of the 114th Pennsylvania Infantry playing cards at Petersburg, Virginia, in August, 1864.

gambling casinos against a dealer or banker include blackjack, or *vingt-et-un* (French for twenty-one, the score the players try to reach), and baccarat, or *chemin-de-fer* (French for railroad, used because the game moves so fast).

The favorite card game among private players is apt to be poker, which appeared in the United States early in the nineteenth century and has been going strong ever since. Poker is played at every level of society. The famous Kentucky senator, Henry Clay, was an expert player. So was Arnold Rothstein, the leader of New York's underworld during the early decades of the twentieth century. Rothstein was murdered because of a poker game. He lost $340,000 and refused to pay up, contending that the game had been rigged. Rothstein stalled for weeks and his fellow poker players finally grew impatient. On November 4, 1928, the gangster was shot by an unknown assailant.

One of the longest poker games in United States history was played in a Washington, D.C., gambling house around 1820. Montjoy Bailey, the sergeant-at-arms of the Senate, and Montford Stokes, a senator from North Carolina, began a game on a Thursday afternoon and continued playing until the following Monday morning, with only a few minutes out for catnaps between hands.

On Monday, when the sergeant-at-arms announced that he had to get back to his duties, Senator Stokes looked startled and growled that if he had known that Bailey hadn't intended to play very long, he never would have started the game.

WANNA BET?

Two widely known forms of gambling use neither cards nor dice. One is roulette; the other is the slot machine.

In roulette, a small ivory ball is spun in a bowl-shaped turntable. The turntable has alternating red and black slots that are numbered irregularly from one to thirty-six. The players can bet on several variables—whether the slot the ball lands in will be red or black, odd or even, or numbered between one and eighteen or nineteen and thirty-six.

In European casinos, roulette wheels have a green slot numbered zero; in the United States they have both a zero and a double-zero (oo) slot. When the ball lands on zero or double-zero, the money goes to the house. Thus the odds in favor of the house are greater in Las Vegas than they are at Monte Carlo.

Roulette is descended from a game called hoca that was played in the seventeenth century. Cardinal

A game of roulette at a Las Vegas casino during the 1940s.

Mazarin, who served as chief minister to Louis XIII and Louis XIV of France, encouraged the building of hoca casinos to raise money for the royal treasury. The hoca tables he authorized had three zeros, so the casinos won quite regularly. This created so much ill-will that after Mazarin died in 1661, a law was passed stating that anyone running a hoca casino would be executed.

In roulette, the ball and the wheel are spun in opposite directions. In another variation of the game, boule, only the ball moves. Boule is one of the few forms of gambling allowed in Switzerland. The stakes

are limited to the Swiss equivalent of about fifty cents, and the government takes a percentage of the profits to provide funds for the victims of national disasters such as fires, floods, and avalanches.

Roulette appeared some time during the eighteenth century and created as much of a craze as playing cards had a few centuries before. Empress Catherine the Great of Russia had several roulette wheels in her palace, including one in the kitchen so that her chefs could play. Sultan Selim III of Turkey learned about roulette from French soldiers captured in Egypt during the French Revolutionary wars in 1798. The sultan promptly ordered a roulette wheel constructed for his pleasure.

Roulette is one of the leading games at Monte Carlo and is usually thought of as a rich man's pastime. Slot machines, which are less complicated and can be played for quarters, attract a less wealthy crowd. The player inserts a coin in the machine and pulls a handle that sets three wheels spinning. The reels are marked with a series of symbols, usually fruits. If a certain combination of symbols appears when the machine stops, a varying number of coins will be returned to the player. Three apples, for instance, might be good for twenty coins, three bananas might be good for fifty, and three oranges might win the jackpot—the entire contents of the machine. Most combinations, of course, pay nothing.

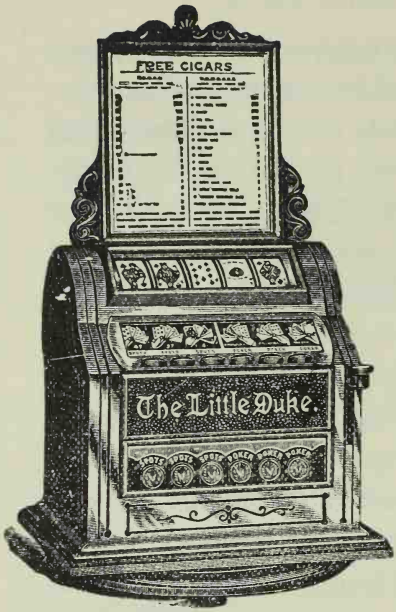
The slot machine was invented in 1895 by an American mechanic named Charles Fey. He called his first one the Liberty Bell and rented it to a San Francisco

gambling house for fifty percent of the take. Since Fey's slot machine had several thousand possible combinations of symbols and only about a dozen paid back any coins, he made a tidy profit from his invention. The slot machine manufacturers who came after him have done equally well, which explains why the machines are so often referred to as one-armed bandits

Like all forms of gambling, roulette wheels and slot machines involve a wager. The gambler is betting that he or she can, through some special knowledge, talent, or hunch, predict the outcome of a particular event. Even without the aid of mechanical devices, human beings have seldom had difficulty finding things to bet on.

Eighteenth-century England produced some of history's most compulsive and imaginative bettors. In 1755 one eccentric nobleman, the fourth earl of Queensberry, bet a friend that he could cause a letter to travel at the then unheard-of speed of fifty miles an hour. The duke hired a team of cricket players and enclosed the letter in a cricket ball. It was then thrown from one man to another, and in the course of the match actually went faster than the stipulated fifty miles an hour.

In a book about the manners and customs of eighteenth-century London, one writer told how four members of Parliament threw their hats into a river, "laid a crown each whose hat should first swim to the mill, and ran hallooing after them; and he that won



FREE!

The Little Duke

Six Slot Card Machine is the very latest novelty in the line of card machines, embracing an entirely new feature in the fact that **six can play at once.** Can be used as a gaming or trade device. For nickels or pennies, the last coin played remains in full view until the next play is made, thus avoiding all disputes. Machine is metal, nickle plated, and revolves on base. Size, 14x9x8; weight 30 lbs.

NOTE.—The Little Duke has the cards on rollers. The Six Way Paying Teller flips the cords under a wire.

With 750 Nickel Cigars, worth.....$37.50
And 150 Ten Cent Cigars, worth..... 15.00
One Little Duke, worth 50.00
Total Value..... $102.50

ALL FOR $31 50

Remember we put the large commissions, paid to Jobbers and Salesmen, and the cost of expensive advertising into gifts for our customers securing their good will and duplicate orders.

Our cigars are the best 5-cent goods.

FREE! Fine Oak Mounted Show Case, No. A 50.

Early twentieth-century advertisement for "The Little Duke," a slot machine featuring a revolving base and six separate slots.

the prize was in a greater rapture than if he had carried the most dangerous point in Parliament."

For a while it was fashionable to bet on people's lives. Wagers might be placed on whether a prominent lord or lady would die before a certain date or whether the king would survive for another year. At a London club, a member once fell to the floor unconscious and two fellow members promptly placed bets on whether or not he would die. The bets were called off when someone insisted on sending for a doctor.

If the man had medical help, it was argued, it would not be a fair contest.

Bets on travel feats were also common. In 1788 a young Irish nobleman wagered 20,000 pounds that he could walk from Dublin to Constantinople and back within a year—which he did. A few years earlier an English baronet won an even larger sum when he bet that he could go to Lapland and return within a specified period of time with two Lapp women and a pair of reindeer. Jules Verne's hero Phileas Fogg, who wagered half his fortune that he could go around the world in eighty days, was obviously not a complete figment of the author's imagination.

The United States has also had its share of unusual bets and daring bettors. In 1886, a New York gambler named Steve Brodie bet a group of his cronies that he could jump off the Brooklyn Bridge and survive. He won, but to this day no one is sure whether he jumped off the bridge or, as some skeptics claimed, simply arranged to have a dummy dropped in the river while he hid under a pier.

Even better known is John "Bet You a Million" Gates, a Chicago businessman who made millions selling wire fencing to the settlers who poured into the West after the Civil War. Gates loved to gamble. He played poker at $500 a chip and bridge at a dollar a point. He bet on prize fights, horses, the stock market, or anything else that struck his fancy.

Gates and another millionaire, John Drake, often used to meet for dinner at a Chicago hotel. One of their favorite pastimes was moistening two lumps of

John W. "Bet You a Million" Gates, 1902.

sugar and counting the number of times a fly landed on each lump. The man whose sugar lump attracted the most flies not only won the game but collected an extra $1000 for each landing he won by.

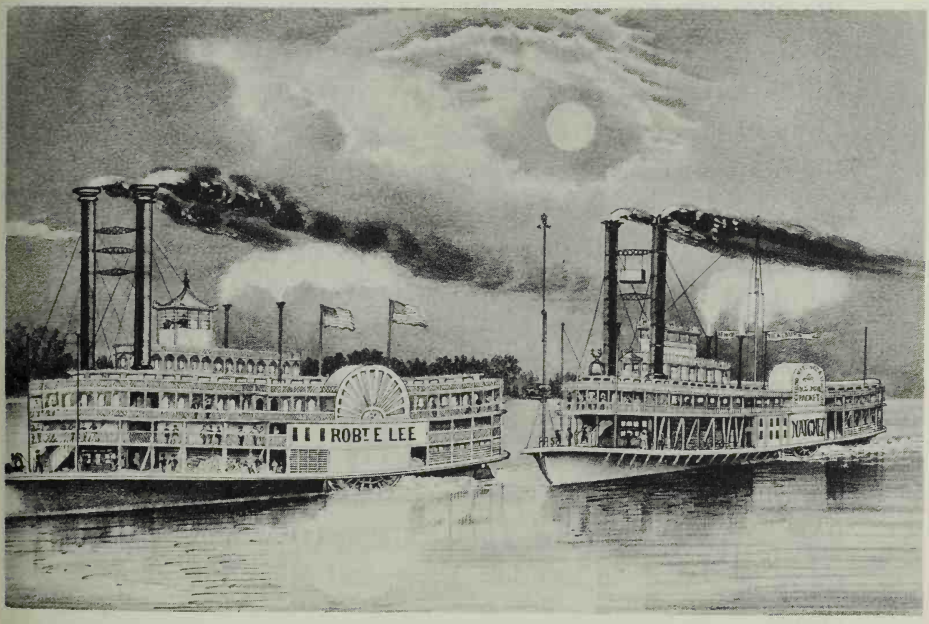
Gates was once looking out a window during a rainstorm when he noticed that one raindrop was trickling down the pane much faster than all the others. He immediately bet a companion $1000 that "his" raindrop would reach the bottom of the window first.

Chronic bettors like John Gates will wager on almost anything, but most bettors prefer to stake their money on games like bingo, billiards, or dominoes, or on public events like presidential elections. The gangster Arnold Rothstein bet a total of about $500,000 on

Herbert Hoover to win the 1928 election. His rivals must have been relieved when Rothstein was murdered two days before election day and couldn't collect on the bets.

In the days of the clipper ships, boat owners and merchants regularly made bets on how long it would take a vessel to cross the Atlantic or sail around the Horn. The advent of steamboats, particularly along the Mississippi River, provided a new set of opportunities for betting.

Although the riverboats were in business to carry freight and passengers, some people forgot that they



The start of the great riverboat race between the Natchez *and the* Robert E. Lee.

had any purpose but racing. If two steamboats going in the same direction met along the waterway, it was almost a foregone conclusion that they would challenge each other to a race. It was also a foregone conclusion that passengers, crew, and even spectators along the riverbank would bet on the contest.

The most competitive riverboat captains carried extra supplies of wood, bacon fat, and lard to make the flames that fired their steam engines burn more fiercely. Veteran travelers always requested berths far away from the engine room because the boilers occasionally exploded from the excess heat.

Of all the races that took place on the Mississippi, the most spectacular was the one between the *Natchez* and the *Robert E. Lee*, which began on June 30, 1870. Enthusiastic crowds converged on New Orleans and St. Louis, the starting and finishing points of the race. Reporters from every major newspaper were on hand, and runners with stopwatches were stationed at strategic points along the race route waiting to telegraph up-to-the-minute reports to the waiting world.

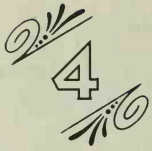
Many spectators bought places on boats anchored along the river to get a better view of the contest. Others lined the shore. Locally there were few people who did not have at least a nickel or a dime riding on the outcome. Many had much more. The race attracted bettors in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, as well as in London, Paris, and other European cities.

The *Robert E. Lee* arrived in St. Louis on the Fourth of July, three days and eighteen hours after

she had left New Orleans. Six hours and thirty-six minutes later, the *Natchez* steamed into port. There were cheers and shouts for both boats but the *Robert E. Lee*, which had arrived first, was given the victory banquet.

However, Captain Thomas P. Leathers of the *Natchez* lost no time in pointing out that he had stopped to take on and discharge passengers and freight and his rival had not. Adding in the time it had taken for these stops, plus a six-hour layover caused by fog, Leathers claimed that his actual running time had been better than the *Robert E. Lee*'s. Although many people agreed with him, bets were paid off on the *Robert E. Lee*. In Europe, however, it was universally agreed that the contest had been unequal and all bets were canceled.

The *Natchez* had been the favorite of the Mississippi riverboat gamblers, most of whom lost money on the race. But the contest was not a total loss. During the more than three days that it took the two boats to get from New Orleans to St. Louis, the gamblers played cards with the spectators on the boats tied up along the river. Their winnings more than made up for the bets they failed to collect.



A SPORTING CHANCE

Different sports have been played in different centuries, but betting on sports has always been popular. The Romans bet on chariot races and gladiators' duels; the Greeks had the Olympic games. In the Middle Ages, there were tournaments or jousts in which two knights on horseback charged each other with fixed lances to see who could unseat his opponent first.

Bearbaiting, which pitted a chained bear against a pack of ferocious dogs, was popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Cockfighting is even older. It began in Greece during the fifth century B.C. In a cockfight, two roosters, wearing brass spurs (or sometimes razor blades) on their claws, are placed in a ring or cockpit. The birds fight until one wounds the other so badly that he is unable to defend himself.

Although cockfighting is outlawed in many parts of the world, it is still popular in India, Latin America, the Philippines, and several European countries, in-

Lithograph of a medieval tournament.

The cock-pit. This eighteenth-century engraving by William Hogarth shows the betting among the spectators as well as the fighting between contestants.

cluding Spain, France, and Greece. Illegal cockfights are also common in parts of the American South.

Betting on contests between animals is a universal pastime. Camel fights are popular in Turkey. The Arabs stage matches between scorpions, using a saucer for a ring. Greyhound races, in which the dogs chase a mechanical hare, attract large crowds in England, France, and some parts of the United States. The Belgians bet on pigeon races and the Thais on tortoise races. The latter are especially sadistic because fires are lighted on the giant turtles' backs to make them move faster.

In Spain and Mexico, bullfights are a favorite source of entertainment. At a bullfight the bets are not on whether the matador or the bull will win, but on which of the five or six matadors who appear during the afternoon will perform with the greatest skill.

In Latin America and southern Europe, jai alai, or pelota, attracts many bettors. The game is also played in the United States: there are jai alai frontons in Miami, Las Vegas, and several Connecticut cities. The sport, which has been called the fastest game in the world, is a form of handball. The players perform singly or in teams, catching and throwing the pelota, or ball, with cestas, long wicker baskets strapped to their wrists.

Betting on jai alai is similar to betting at the racetrack. A bettor can pick a player or team to win, place (come in first or second), or show (finish in the top three). A number of more complicated bets can also be made. With one, the quiniela, the bettor picks two

of the half dozen or so competing players to finish first and second, although not necessarily in that order.

Great Britain is one of the few countries in the world where public betting offices handle bets on every sport. The favorites are cricket, rugby, and football, known in America as soccer. Football betting is common in the other countries of Europe and in Africa and South America as well. The betting is generally done through football pools in which the total amount collected in bets is divided among the winners.

In the United States only Delaware, Montana, and Nevada allow betting on national sports events, but illegal betting is common everywhere. The key man in any type of large-scale betting operation, legal or illegal, is the professional bookmaker, or bookie. He collects and pays off bets and make his profit by keeping a percentage for himself. If there are seven horses in a race, for instance, the bookmaker might set the odds a point shorter—five to one, instead of six to one—to allow for his fee.

Most bookmakers set far more complicated odds. In racing the odds are calculated on the basis of a horse's past performance, the jockey who will ride him, the horses he will be racing against, and the racetrack conditions for the day. Racetrack odds are usually taken from the daily racing sheets that publish news of the tracks. In other sports the bookies' odds are set by a central clearinghouse that transmits the information to clearinghouses around the country.

Almost every habitual bettor knows or can easily find an illegal bookie. In the United States, bookies

are part of a well-organized network. They take most of their bets by telephone and do a thriving business on horse races, World Series and Superbowl games, and on prize fights, particularly when a heavyweight championship is at stake.

Betting on prize fights dates back to the days of ancient Rome. The Roman fighters wore gloves studded with metal spikes; by the end of the fight the ring was a pool of blood. Boxing was revived in seventeenth-century England. The participants fought with bare knuckles and the bouts were almost as bloody as the Roman ones. A spectator at one fight not only bet on the probable winner but placed another wager that if the fight lasted ten more rounds, a gold coin tossed in the ring would be instantly covered with blood.

In 1865, John Sholto Douglas, the eighth marquess of Queensberry, drew up a set of rules that made boxing less brutal. The code, which came into general use by 1889, called for padded gloves and a limited number of three-minute rounds. Gouging, wrestling, and foul blows were forbidden.

In the United States, boxing was illegal in a majority of states until the 1890s. In 1853 a bout between a New York heavyweight, John "Old Smoke" Morrissey, and an Australian immigrant who called himself Yankee Sullivan was held in Boston Four Corners, about a hundred miles north of New York. The location was chosen because no one was sure whether the village was in New York, Massachusetts, or Connecti-

cut, and it was hoped that the fighters would be safe from arrest in all three states.

Modern boxing is carefully regulated by state boxing or athletic commissions and every precaution is taken to make sure that professional gamblers do not try to fix the fights.

Fixing is a major worry in any sport and it can happen—and has happened—in amateur as well as professional sports. In 1951 people were shocked to learn of a scandal in college basketball. Thirty-two players from seven leading colleges were accused of conspiring with professional gamblers to shave points off the

Heavyweight boxing match in Las Vegas, February 14, 1973. Spectators who pay for ringside seats often have large amounts of money riding on the fight.

scores in their games. The New York district attorney alleged that between 1947 and 1950 a total of eighty-six games in twenty-three cities had been fixed. Three gamblers and almost a dozen players were arrested as a result of the disclosure. The gamblers received jail sentences, the players got off with suspended sentences, one coach was dismissed for not supervising his team more closely, and several of the colleges abandoned basketball as a major sport.

The 1951 scandal was the worst in college sports history. In professional sports there had been an earlier and even more shocking attempt at game fixing: the Black Sox scandal of 1919.

The 1919 World Series was between the Chicago White Sox and the Cincinnati Reds. Arnold Rothstein offered a group of Chicago players $10,000 each to let Cincinnati win. They did, and Rothstein collected $350,000 in bets.

When the bribes were discovered, a disgusted public promptly dubbed the White Sox the Black Sox. Eight players and Rothstein were brought to trial, but although several of the players confessed to the fixing, the jury could not bring itself to convict any of them. Like the rest of the nation, they evidently found it hard to believe that baseball players could be so dishonest. Rothstein was also acquitted because he had been clever enough to make sure that there was no evidence of his role in the fix.

The episode, the most shameful in baseball history, almost sounded the death knell for the game. In the aftermath of the scandal, the owners of baseball's

major league teams agreed to hire a commissioner to supervise the sport and restore public confidence in baseball. Despite the jury's decision to acquit the players accused of taking the bribes, the new commissioner, Judge Kennesaw Mountain Landis, barred all of them from playing major league baseball again.

Since then, professional sports teams have tried to avoid even the suggestion that their games might be fixed. In 1963 the National Football League fined five Detroit Lions and suspended two more for betting on another team to win the championship that year. There was no evidence that the bets involved rigging games, but the commission that studied the case agreed that when players gamble on their own sport, they are apt to get into debt and may be tempted to cheat to get out.

There is no way to stop private bettors from wagering on sports events among themselves, nor does anyone really want to. But when betting is conducted on a large scale, with an eye to making a profit, there is always the possibility that greed and dishonesty will creep in. And games in which human beings participate are the easiest to fix.

Experienced gamblers have an adage: Never bet on anything that talks. That may be one reason so many bettors prefer to put their money on horses.

PLAYING THE HORSES

Horse racing is an ancient sport. The Assyrian kings who reigned around 1500 B.C. kept elaborate stables and hired professional trainers to supervise their horses. By the seventh century B.C. chariot races were a regular feature of the Olympic games.

Organized racing was also known in ancient China, Persia, and Arabia. Rome had chariot and mounted races as well as the more hazardous Roman races. In a Roman race the rider used two horses and stood with one foot on the back of each.

During the reign of Augustus (27 B.C. to A.D. 14) the Romans had twelve horse races every day. Vespasian, who became emperor in A.D. 69, raised the number to one hundred. From all accounts the races were tumultuous affairs. There were accusations—and denials—that certain horses had been doped, squabbles over betting, and an assortment of other disputes that frequently erupted into riots. Gamblers and book-

makers abounded and bettors who couldn't get to the races received the results by carrier pigeon.

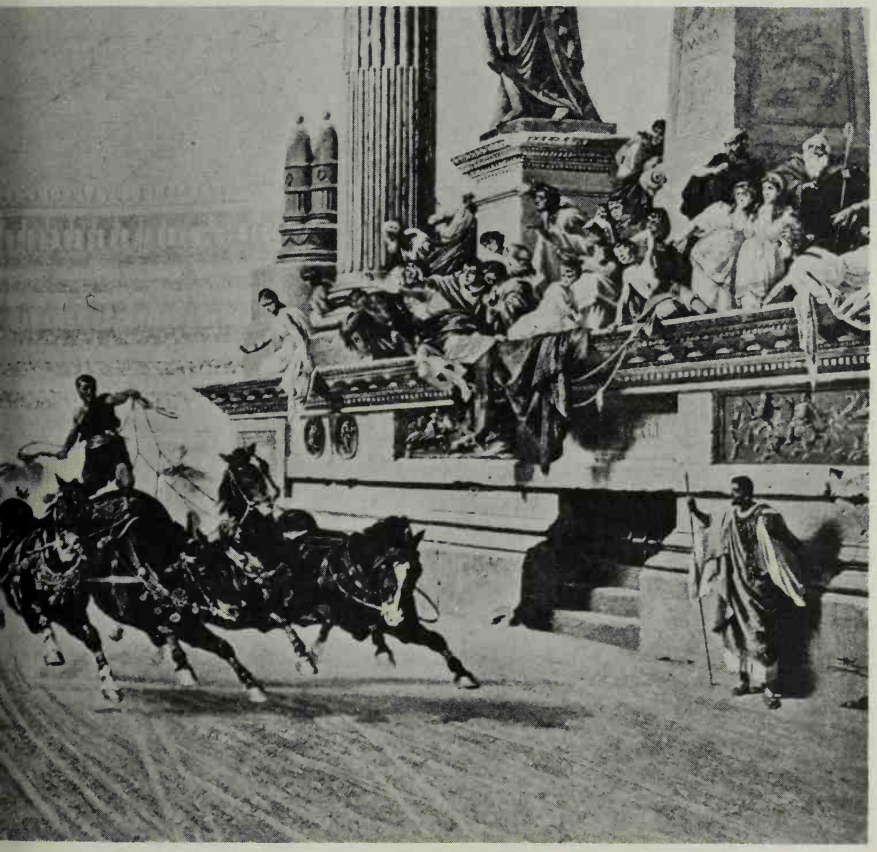
Roman horse races were surprisingly sophisticated. They had starting chutes for the horses and officials to supervise the races and rule on the results. The Romans were also interested in horse breeding. They kept registries of bloodlines and race records and honored their outstanding horses by putting monuments on their graves. One particularly fleet racer was listed on his gravestone as having had 1300 wins, 88 seconds, and 37 thirds.

Horse racing died out after the fall of Rome, but was revived in the twelfth century by King Richard the Lion-Hearted. The king, who had become an admirer of Arabian horses during the crusades, is said to have offered the first purse—forty pounds in gold—for a three-mile course with knights as riders.

King Charles II, who reigned some five hundred years later, is known as the father of British racing. In 1665 he established a racetrack, Newmarket, on a former royal hunting preserve and offered the King's Plate—silver cups and bowls—as prizes.

Indirectly, Charles II was also responsible for bringing organized horse racing to America. In 1665, the same year he established Newmarket, he appointed Richard Nicolls the first royal governor of New York. Soon after Nicolls arrived in the former Dutch city, he ordered a racetrack laid out at Hempstead Plains, Long Island. It was called Newmarket, after its English counterpart. Races were held in the spring and

Chariot race at the Circus Maximus in Rome.
The seating capacity of this ancient arena was 380,000.
Fifty horse races were held there each day.



Engraving of horse racing at Newmarket. The Long Island racecourse was America's first.

fall, and the governor donated a silver cup as first prize.

Even before that, however, informal races had been held on the paths around Jamestown, Virginia, for prizes like a cask of tobacco or a hogshead of claret. Eventually the Southerners built more formal racetracks at Williamsburg, Alexandria, and Fredericksburg in Virginia and at Annapolis, Maryland. George Washington entered his horses in the races at Alexandria and Annapolis, and served as steward of the Jockey Club, which was organized to supervise the Alexandria track.

Informal racing continued even after the establishment of racetracks. In some parts of the colonies, races were held on public roads. In New York, a newspaper published in 1753 noted that "Tuesday morning last a considerable sum was depending between a number of gentlemen in this city on a horse starting from one of the gates of the city to go to Kingsbridge and back again being fourteen measured miles (one way) in two hours time; which he performed with one rider in 1 hr. and 46 min."

Some cities frowned on public road racing. Philadelphia outlawed it in 1726. "Since the city has become so populous," the city fathers declared, "horse racing at fairs in the Sassafras Street is very dangerous to life."

The highlights of American horse racing in the first half of the nineteenth century were the North-South races. They began in the 1820s, when horse breeders from the two sections of the country were trying to outdo each other in producing the swiftest racers. The North-South meets became regular events, attracting horse lovers and bettors from all over the country. The last of the North-South races was held in 1845. By then tension between the two sections of the country was growing. They disagreed on the subject of slavery, and their attitudes toward racing differed as well. Southern racing fans tended to be breeders and horse lovers, while Northern fans were more likely to be professional gamblers who were only interested in making money from the sport.

The Civil War temporarily disrupted racing. After

1865 it resumed on a much more elaborate scale. The railroads, which had replaced the steamboats as the nation's leading form of transportation, were constantly looking for ways to increase their revenues. They decided that one way was to build racetracks a short distance from major cities and run special trains to take people back and forth. Another was to build tracks at summer resorts and spas to which people traveled by train.

The first of the resort-type racetracks was Saratoga. The town of Saratoga Springs, New York, was already famous for its mineral springs, but its visitors needed some amusement other than taking their daily baths and doses of mineral water. A harness-racing track opened in Saratoga during the 1850s and was a great success. In 1865, a group of businessmen led by Cornelius Vanderbilt, president of the New York Central Railroad, organized the Saratoga Association for the Improvement of the Breed of Horses. They financed the construction of a saddle racetrack in a forty-five acre landscaped park, and the August racing season at Saratoga immediately became one of the country's leading social events.

In 1869, another group of promoters raised money to build Monmouth Park racetrack in Long Branch, New Jersey. Already a popular resort, the area had become even more fashionable after President Ulysses S. Grant decided to make it his summer home. Not to be outdone by Northerners, a group of Kentucky racing fans founded the Kentucky Derby in 1875. They built a track a few miles outside of Louisville on the

site of a farm that had belonged to a family named Churchill. A newspaper reporter named it Churchill Downs, in imitation of Epsom Downs, where the famous English Derby is held.

In the United States, the biggest and best-known tracks specialize in flat racing—saddle horses ridden on round or oval tracks. However, steeplechase racing is a great favorite in England, Ireland, and France. A steeplechase is run on a course that includes such obstacles as hedgerows, fences, ponds, and clumps of trees. It got its name in the days when participants raced informally and had to use the steeples of local churches as landmarks to tell if they were on the right course.

Harness racing, in which the rider sits in a light two-wheeled sulky, is an organized sport in forty-six countries. In the United States, the most famous harness racing event is the Hambletonian Stakes, held each August in Goshen, New York. The race was named after a champion harness racer of the 1850s who sired a new breed of trotting horses known as Hambletonians.

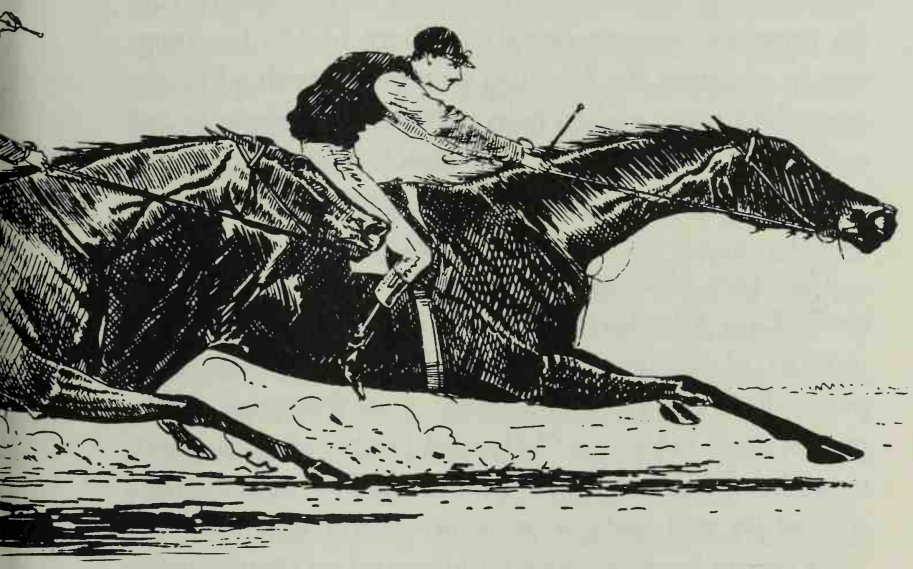
For centuries, the favorite breed for flat racing has been the thoroughbred. The breed developed when English horse owners began studying the animals that did well in races and tried to follow their bloodlines in breeding new horses. Thoroughbreds were the result of mating English mares with Arabian stallions. The breed has been traced back as far as 1605. In the process it was discovered that, quite by accident,

1867 advertisement for thoroughbred racing in Saratoga.

all thoroughbreds are descended from the same three stallions, Matchem, Diomed, and Eclipse.

In the early days of horse racing the races were always match races. Two horse owners challenged each other to a race to see whose horse was faster. The owners raced their own horses and put up the

OGA
NG AUGUST



money for the prize. But the system had a serious drawback. If for some reason one rider failed to show up, the race had to be canceled. Eventually a "play or pay" rule was instituted. This meant that the owner who did not compete forfeited his share of the purse. That satisfied his opponent but it usually left a lot of disgruntled spectators.

During the reign of King Charles II, a new system—

open-field racing—was adopted. Several horses, often ridden by professional riders, competed against each other. This meant that the races were less likely to be called off, but it also made the betting more complicated. The odds against a particular horse's winning were now six or seven to one instead of fifty-fifty.

Previously, an intermediate, or keeper of the match book, was often used to record the results and, in a close race, to determine the winner of the purse. Now his presence became essential. There had to be someone to compute the amounts of money involved in the open-field races and to help bettors find people to bet against. The keeper of the match book's functions were eventually taken over by the professional bookmaker.

The sport of kings has undergone very few changes since King Charles II's day, but there have been a number of changes in the way bets are collected and paid off. To stay in business, a professional bookmaker must achieve a "balanced book"—that is, there must be enough bettors betting against one another so that he will make a profit no matter who wins.

As racing became more popular and racetracks more numerous, the balanced book became harder and harder to achieve. If, as occasionally happened, a majority of bettors put money on the same horse and that horse won, the bookmaker would have to pay out more than he took in.

Dishonest bookmakers skipped town rather than part with their profits, or rigged the races to make sure the favorite lost. Honest bookmakers stopped tak-

ing bets on the favorite once they reached the point where their profits would dwindle. Sometimes they "laid off" or "hedged" their bets by rebetting them with out-of-town bookmakers who were not taking bets on that particular race and could pay off out of the profits from other races.

In 1872 a Parisian bookmaker, Pierre Oller, came up with a new system of betting. He called it pari-mutuel, meaning a wager among ourselves. Oller allowed bettors to buy as many tickets as they liked on whatever horses they liked. The amount they won was calculated on the basis of how many tickets were purchased on each horse.

With the new system, no odds could be given until all the bets were collected; a horse on which a great many people had bet would pay only a small amount of money. But Oller's system also had advantages: it eliminated the temptation to tamper with race results and it insured a profit for the bookmakers.

Intricate mathematics was necessary for Oller's system, and it became more popular after a hand-operated calculating machine was invented in New Zealand in 1880. The machine, which was called a totalizator or "tote," computed odds accurately and quickly. In 1913 a more sophisticated electric calculator appeared. It was tried at Longchamps racetrack in France in 1928; England adopted it two years later. The Americans produced a similar machine in 1932. Today the job is done mainly by computers.

In the years after the Civil War, betting became a big business in the United States—a business run al-

most entirely by professional gamblers. They controlled the racetracks and operated off-track betting offices (called "poolrooms") that made it unnecessary for gamblers to attend the races they bet on. A bettor could select his horse from the racing sheets that published the entries at various tracks and place his bet at the nearest poolroom. The poolrooms handled bets at tracks all over the United States and in Mexico and Canada as well. The results were telegraphed around the country within minutes after the races ended.

The professional gamblers made millions out of racing. A trio of St. Louis operators, known as the CAT syndicate (after the initials of its three members) took over a group of racetracks in the Midwest and earned as much as $10,000 a day from each of them. To make sure its earnings stayed high, the syndicate, along with most of the other gamblers in the business, rigged the races. The two most common methods were doping—using drugs to make a horse run slower or faster—and substituting—entering a fast horse in a race, then substituting a slow one at the last minute (or vice versa).

Eventually these abuses prompted a public outcry against racing. A group that called itself the International Reform Bureau was organized to pressure state legislatures into passing laws against racing. Newspaper editors and business and religious leaders got behind the movement, and racetracks all over the country began to shut down. By 1911 racing was legal only in Maryland, Oklahoma, Montana, Kentucky,

Off-track betting office in New York City, April 30, 1971. These racing fans are waiting to bet on the Kentucky Derby.

Virginia, and Utah, and these states adopted reforms. In Kentucky, bookmakers and poolrooms were outlawed and the pari-mutuel system was put into operation for the first time in the United States.

Horse racing remained illegal in most states until after World War I. By then the automobile was becoming part of American life and money was needed to build new roads and repave old ones. State legislatures decided to legalize racing, adopt the pari-mutuel system, and share in the profits from the bets. Racing began to make a comeback during the 1920s, but in most states it was—and still is—limited to a few months a year and conducted under strict supervision of the state racing commissions.

To prevent doping, saliva and urine tests are now given routinely to winning horses. If a normally fast horse runs poorly, track officials can order tests to see if foul play was involved. As a safeguard against substitution, federal law requires all race horses to have a registration number tattooed on the inside of their lips. As a final precaution, movie cameras film every race to reveal any evidence of the jockeys' cheating.

Despite these reforms, no one has figured out a way to eliminate illegal bookmaking. Even in New York City, where off-track betting is legal, bookies never lack for customers. They are popular with small bettors because bookies take bets for amounts as low as fifty cents, and with big bettors who can wager large sums of money without lowering the odds as they would with the pari-mutuel systems. Not only do the bookmakers offer the convenience of doing business by phone, they also pay out more in winnings than the racetracks do. The percentage they keep for themselves is not as high as the fifteen to seventeen percent that the racetracks must set aside for taxes and operating costs.

The racing world is full of self-styled experts, but even the most knowledgeable cannot always predict a winner. That's why playing the horses can be as risky as playing roulette, and why a sign in the restaurant at one racetrack wisely reminds its patrons: Eat your betting money but don't bet your eating money.

THE LUCK OF THE DRAW

Many people who disapprove of dice, never go to the races, and wouldn't dream of playing cards for money have no qualms about buying lottery tickets. One reason may be that lotteries are usually held for the benefit of worthy causes. Another may be that they require no special skill. All you do is buy a numbered ticket and hope that your number will be drawn.

The first recorded lottery took place in 1466. Madame Jan van Eyck, widow of the Flemish painter, organized it to raise money for the poor in the city of Bruges. A hundred years later, the lottery made its appearance in England. The docks and harbors of five coastal towns—Dover, Sandwich, Hastings, Romney, and Hythe—needed extensive repairs. When the citizens objected to paying for them, the problem was put in the hands of England's warden of ports, who in turn referred it to Queen Elizabeth I. The queen's

ALL
IN ONE DAY,
14th JUNE.
2 of £20,200
Besides 3,000 other Prizes,
Will all be decided the 14th JUNE.
NO CLASSES!
Every Ticket drawn out single, each deciding its own fate and no other.
Awake! arouse! good neighbours all,
And hear your faithful Watchman's call;
Ere yet the day is past and gone,
Mind and take care of number one.
June the Fourteenth the Lottery draws,
No time is left to make a pause;
But, if you'd gain a glorious Prize,
Buy now! while luck before you lies.
Ticket and Share Chances are selling at all the Lottery Offices in London; and by all their Agents in the Country.

Nineteenth-century English lottery advertisement.

solution was to authorize a lottery—the first in her kingdom—to pay for the necessary work.

Since then, lotteries run by, and for, the government have become a major source of revenue not only in Great Britain but in Sweden, Brazil, Israel, France, and a score of other nations, including China. The lottery systems vary from country to country, but the basic principles are the same. Ticket prices are low so that everyone can afford to participate. Small drawings are held daily or weekly, and larger ones usually take place on a monthly or quarterly schedule.

Probably the best-known lottery in the world is the Irish Hospital Sweepstakes. The Sweep, as the Irish call it, began in 1930. It is run by a private company, Hospitals Trust Ltd., and the proceeds go to support hospitals in the Irish Republic.

The drawings, which are held three times a year,

are conducted under the watchful eyes of the Irish government and police. Three days beforehand, the tickets are taken out of their sealed safe-deposit vaults and placed in a wind machine, which blows them around for the next seventy-two hours. Then they are rolled in a long drum, from which a team of nurses select the winning numbers.

Unlike an ordinary lottery, the Irish Sweepstakes is connected with three major horse races: the Irish Sweeps Derby and the Grand National and Cambridgeshire in England. As each winning number is drawn from the drum, a second slip of paper is also selected. The second slip has the name of a horse competing in one of the races. If the horse drawn with a winning number finishes first, second, or third, the grand prize is awarded; but anyone whose number is drawn wins a prize.

Tickets for the Irish Sweepstakes can officially be sold only in Ireland, but they invariably find their way into other countries, including the United States. A United States law prohibits the sale of lottery tickets through the mails, and United States postal officials regularly seize envelopes going to and from the offices of Hospital Trusts Ltd. in Dublin. There is also a brisk business in counterfeit tickets. Most buyers never realize they've been duped. They assume that they didn't win, without ever knowing that their tickets weren't even in the draw.

In the United States, lotteries have had a long and not always glorious history. A lottery helped to launch the American colonies. In 1612 King James I gave per-

mission for a drawing to raise funds for the recently settled colony of Virginia. Virginia and other colonies were soon organizing lotteries of their own to pay for the construction of roads and bridges and the building of schools, churches, and hospitals.

On December 6, 1746, the colony of New York approved a lottery to raise 2250 pounds "for the advancement of learning and towards the founding of a college." The college became Columbia University.

Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Williams, and Rhode Island College (now Brown University) were all financed in part by lotteries. Nor were they the only beneficiaries. A lottery held in 1762 provided the funds to build a steeple on St. John's Episcopal Church in Providence, Rhode Island. That same year Boston organized a lottery to rebuild Faneuil Hall, a market house and public hall that had been destroyed by fire a few months before.

Colonial Americans also used lotteries to raise money for defense. During the French and Indian War the colony of Massachusetts authorized a lottery to finance a military expedition against Canada. It paid for uniforms and equipment for the Massachusetts soldiers who fought under General James Wolfe at the battle of Quebec in 1759.

In 1776, the Continental Congress voted to help finance the American Revolution by raising $10 million through a lottery. A lottery wheel marked with numbered slots was designed and set up in Philadelphia. Several spins of the wheel were required to put together a winning combination. The Continental

Congress offered a total of $5 million in prizes but since the nation was embarrassingly short of funds, all prizes over fifty dollars were to be paid in promissory notes.

The congressmen already had their hands full trying to run a new country and fight a war; they were not prepared to take on a lottery in the bargain. Ticket sales were slow and the drawings were constantly postponed. The lawmakers finally conceded that the lottery was a disaster and called it off. The Revolution was financed through loans from wealthy Americans and eventually with the help of the French government.

During the eighteenth century, private citizens frequently applied to the state legislatures for permission to hold lotteries on their own. They raised funds to pay off mortgages, settle debts, or provide incomes for impoverished widows and orphans. Lotteries were also used to raise money to finance new businesses. Hemp growing in New York and paper manufacturing in Massachusetts owed their beginnings to lotteries.

Thomas Jefferson was a staunch advocate of using lotteries to raise public funds. He called them "a salutary instrument wherein the tax is laid on the willing only." In 1826, the eighty-three-year-old former president had to apply to the Virginia legislature for permission to run a lottery for himself.

The country was in the throes of an economic depression at the time and Virginia had been particularly hard hit. One-third of its population had moved westward. Land values plummeted, crop prices fell, and

some of the state's most prominent families were hard pressed to pay their bills.

Already in serious financial trouble, Jefferson co-signed a $20,000 promissory note for an old friend. The man defaulted and his creditors promptly demanded the money. The new debt left Jefferson owing more than $100,000. His only assets were his home at Monticello and two other parcels of Virginia real estate, but because of the westward migration there was no hope of selling them at a decent price. Jefferson decided that the best way to raise the money he needed was to offer the properties as prizes in a lottery.

Two lottery agents from New York were hired to manage the drawing. They printed the tickets and put them on sale, but most people had their own financial woes and there were few buyers. When it became obvious that the lottery was a failure, a group of Jefferson's admirers raised $16,500, which they presented to him as a gift. They also planned to buy up and destroy all the tickets to the Jefferson lottery, but the plan was never carried out; on July 4, 1826, Thomas Jefferson died.

Death had saved Jefferson from becoming the beneficiary of a public lottery. His benefactors thought that was the end of the matter. They seemed unaware that his daughter, Martha Jefferson Randolph, had inherited her father's debts, and made no effort to dissuade her when she decided that the only way to settle them was to proceed with the lottery.

Ticket buyers had been scarce when Jefferson was

alive; after his death they all but vanished. The lottery had to be canceled and Jefferson's personal property and real estate were sold at auction instead. Although land values were still low, the addition of Jefferson's personal property, including his slaves, provided enough to pay his debts. Martha Jefferson Randolph remained penniless, however, until the legislatures of Virgina and South Carolina each voted her a gift of $10,000.

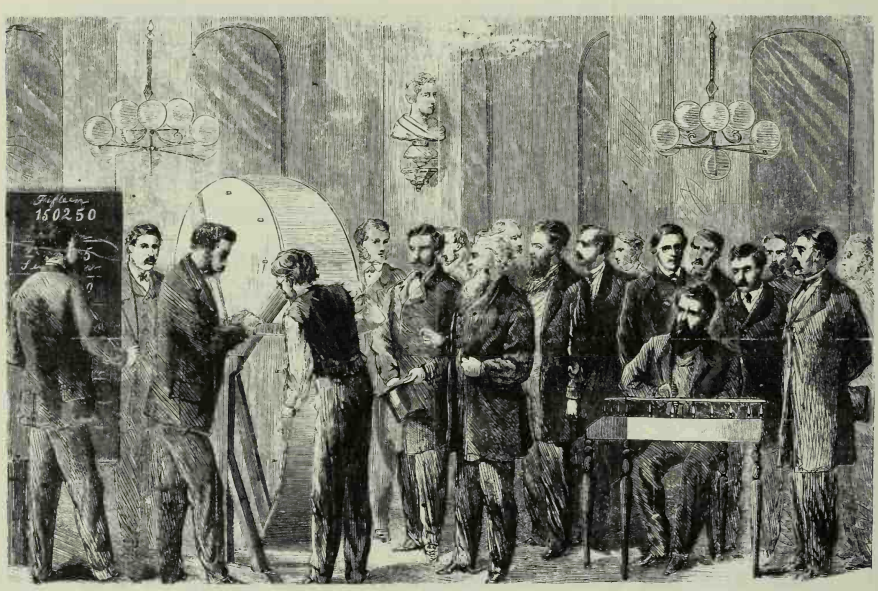
For the first few decades after the American Revolution, lotteries continued to be the accepted way of raising money for public improvements. The system became so much a part of American life that few people stopped to question the fact that many lotteries were being run for private profit as well as public gain.

Lottery promoters and managers charged a handsome fee—often as much as twenty-five percent of the total ticket sales—for their services. They also gave away huge sums as prizes. As a result the beneficiaries of the lottery received only a fraction of the money taken in. In 1811, for example, the Massachusetts legislature authorized a lottery in the town of Plymouth to raise $16,000 for beach improvements. Although drawings were held regularly over a period of nine years, less than $10,000 was spent on the beach. The promoters' profits came to several times that amount, however, and more than $886,000 was distributed in prizes.

The average lottery operator had a sales pitch designed to attract the gullible and the ignorant. "If

anybody wants TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS," a typical advertisement proclaimed, "they are requested to call on John Russell who will, for a trifling consideration, put them in a way to realize that, or another sum of less magnitude in the course of September next, when the rich wheels of Hatfield Bridge Lottery will begin to move."

The lotteries thrived. At one point New York had so many that a list of the drawings filled half a column in a local newspaper. Another newspaper commented that a stranger visiting the city might surmise that "one half of the citizens get their living by affording



1867 Harper's Weekly *illustration of The Orphan Home and School Lottery in New York City. The winning numbers are being drawn from a lottery wheel.*

the opportunity of gambling to the rest." In 1833 a visitor to Philadelphia counted over two hundred lottery offices. A year earlier a man who had taken the trouble to do some arithmetic discovered that eight Eastern states had a total of 420 lotteries offering annual prizes of about $53 million. Adding in the fees charged by the operators, the amount of money paid out in the drawings came to over $66 million, or, as the man noted, "five times the sum of the annual expenses of the American government."

In addition to growing bigger, many of the lotteries were also becoming corrupt. In 1818, the New York State legislature undertook an investigation of the Medical Science Lottery after a newspaper editor accused its managers of fraud. The legislature discovered that one of the lottery operators regularly gave advance information—mostly to politicians—on which numbers would be drawn. The same man had once drawn a lottery prize of $35,000 for an influential friend. After this disclosure, the lawmakers refused to authorize any more lotteries in New York State and outlawed the sale of lottery tickets except for drawings that had already been approved.

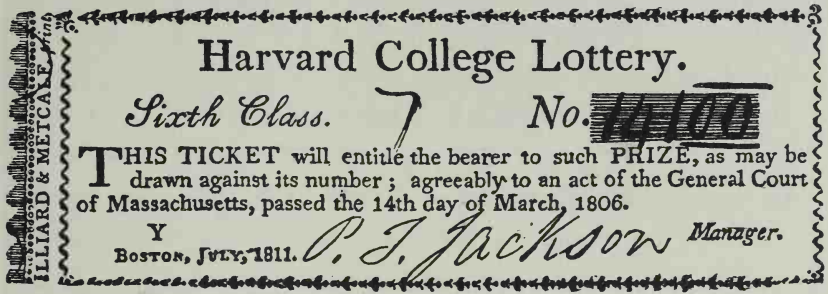
Even more money was lost in a lottery fraud in Washington, D.C. In 1823, Congress authorized the Grand National Lottery to pay for improvements to the city. Tickets were sold and the drawing took place, but before the winners could collect their prize money the organizer of the lottery disappeared. With him went several hundred thousand dollars that was to have been awarded as prizes.

The majority of the Grand National Lottery winners accepted their loss with a minimum of complaint, but the man who had won the grand prize of $100,000 was angry enough to fight back. He filed suit to collect his winnings, and after four years of legal wrangling the United States Supreme Court ruled that the city of Washington was legally obligated to pay him the full amount.

The Supreme Court decision made many local governments wary of authorizing lotteries. By this time, too, there had been so many instances of fraud that the public was becoming disenchanted with the drawings. An antilottery society was organized in Philadelphia in 1833. Not long after that, Pennsylvania passed a law banning all lotteries. Massachusetts, New York, and a number of other states followed suit.

Perhaps the most outrageous lottery fraud in American history was the Great Louisiana Real Estate Lottery, which took place in the late 1830s. The lottery promoters offered some of the most valuable buildings in New Orleans—including the newly completed St. Charles Hotel—as prizes. Amazingly nobody questioned the fact that such choice real estate could, or would, be disposed of by a lottery. Nor did the ticket buyers know or care where the proceeds would go. Thousands of tickets were sold, but when the day of the drawing dawned, its promoters had all left town. Louisiana, somewhat belatedly, passed a law against lotteries in 1838.

By 1850 American lotteries had all but disappeared. At the end of the Civil War, however, the South was


Harvard College Lottery.
Sixth Class. 7 No. 11,100
THIS TICKET will entitle the bearer to such PRIZE, as may be drawn against its number; agreeably to an act of the General Court of Massachusetts, passed the 14th day of March, 1806.
Boston, July, 1811. P. J. Jackson Manager.
ILLIARD & METCALF, Print.

Harvard College Lottery ticket, 1811.

TWENTIETH
CLASS
7168
B
ONE
DOLLAR
THE LOUISIANA STATE LOTTERY CO.
Will Draw at New Orleans on Tuesday, Feb. 9, 1892.
THE MONTHLY TWENTY DOLLAR DRAWING.
SIX
THIS TWENTIETH TICKET ENTITLES THE HOLDER THEREOF TO ONE-TWENTIETH OF SUCH PRIZE AS MAY BE DRAWN BY ITS NUMBER IN THE WITHIN-NAMED DRAWING, IF PRESENTED FOR PAYMENT BEFORE THE EXPIRATION OF THREE MONTHS FROM THE DATE OF SAID DRAWING.
SEVEN ONE SIX FOUR THREE
71643
Paul Leonard
PRESIDENT

Louisiana Lottery Company ticket, 1892.

IRISH HOSPITALS' SWEEPSTAKE TICKET
THE GRAND NATIONAL
TO BE RUN AT AINTREE, ENGLAND, 1950
(DATE WILL APPEAR IN PRESS)
CLOSING DATE 13TH FEBRUARY 1950
SUBSCRIPTION
10/-
TEN SHILLINGS STERLING
EVERY PRIZEWINNER WILL BE NOTIFIED OFFICIALLY.
DRAW LISTS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.
XG 03926
WARNING DO NOT TAKE THIS TICKET UNLESS THE PERSON OFFERING IT IS KNOWN TO YOU AS TRUSTWORTHY
THE PURCHASER SHOULD NOTE CAREFULLY THE ADDRESS OF HIS FRIEND FROM WHOM HE BUYS THIS TICKET, SO THAT HE CAN OBTAIN FROM HIM OUR OFFICIAL RECEIPT.

Irish Sweepstakes ticket, 1950

undergoing a severe financial crisis and lotteries began making a comeback. The largest and best known of these postwar lotteries was held in Louisiana under the auspices of a private corporation, the Louisiana Lottery Company. The company was chartered by the legislature for a period of twenty-five years. It was given a monopoly on all the lottery business in the state and was exempt from paying taxes. In return the company agreed to contribute $40,000 a year toward the upkeep of the Charity Hospital in New Orleans.

The Louisiana Lottery was launched under highly respectable circumstances and with the understanding that tickets would be sold only in the state of Louisiana. But before long it was doing business all over the country and had degenerated into a rich, powerful, and completely corrupt enterprise.

A few years after its founding, the Serpent, as the lottery came to be called, was making a profit of $13 million a year. Its out-of-state sales totaled some $5 million a year and accounted for half of all the mail that passed through the New Orleans post office.

The Louisiana Lottery Company abided by its agreement to support the New Orleans Charity Hospital and also gave large and well-publicized donations to other charitable institutions. But its directors had less interest in raising funds for charity than they had in reaping huge profits for themselves. They spent millions of dollars building up a political machine to protect their interests, and millions more destroying anyone who attempted to criticize or restrict their operations.

A growing number of citizens became disgusted

A New York State Lottery contestant after learning she's won the grand prize of $125,000. June, 1976.

with the Louisiana Lottery Company and in 1879 the legislature voted to repeal the company's charter. Since the charter had been issued for a period of twenty-five years, the U.S. District Court struck down the move on the grounds that it was a violation of contract. Many people suspected that the prolottery forces had again exerted their influence.

In 1890, when the charter was within three years of expiring, the company began mustering its forces for the battle to have it renewed. One of the Serpent's founders, John A. Morris, grandly announced that the company would give the state $500,000 a year for the next twenty-five years. Part of the money would go to charities; the rest would pay for the construction and repairs of the levees along the Mississippi River. When the governor of Louisiana denounced the proposal as an attempt to bribe the public, Morris immediately raised his offer to $1 million.

The bribery and intimidation involved in trying to get the lottery's charter renewed was reported in newspapers around the country. In response to public indignation, President Benjamin Harrison asked Congress to pass a law prohibiting the sale and distribution of lottery tickets through the mails. The law, which is still on effect, was enacted in record time. It stopped the Louisiana Lottery Company from operating on a national scale and caused a disastrous drop in its profits.

Meanwhile, an antilottery political organization had come to power in Louisiana. It was strong enough to elect both a governor and a majority in the legislature. They voted against renewing the Louisiana Lottery

Company's charter, but the Serpent refused to die. It transferred its headquarters to Honduras, but business continued to decline and it finally expired in 1906.

For a long while lotteries survived solely as a means of raising money at bazaars and charity balls. Then in 1963 the state of New Hampshire authorized a public lottery to raise money for the state's education system. Since then some dozen other states have voted to sponsor lotteries to meet similar items in their budgets.

Their supporters insist that the new lotteries are a good idea because participation is optional and they raise money that would otherwise be collected in taxes. Their opponents argue that the people who participate are usually the ones who can least afford it, and that since the lotteries must spend heavily on advertising, gimmicks, and prizes to induce people to buy tickets, they cut into the states' profits.

Whatever their other merits, the new state lotteries at least seem to be honest. To date there has been only one scandal. In 1975 it was discovered that the New York State Lottery was drawing numbers that had not been sold and returning the unclaimed prize money to the lottery's treasury. The disclosure resulted in the dismissal of the state's lottery director and a promise by Governor Hugh Carey to be more vigilant in the future.

It is possible that state lotteries will become as much a part of the American revenue-collecting system as government-run lotteries in other parts of the world. It is also possible that the public will become disillusioned with lotteries and demand their abolition once again.

THE NUMBERS

Playing the numbers is the most widespread form of illegal gambling in the United States. Several billion dollars change hands each year on the game. Most of it comes from the pockets of black working-class bettors; all of it goes into the hands of organized crime.

The numbers is an offshoot of a type of gambling that developed as a sideline to the lottery. A person who could not afford to pay the full price of a lottery ticket could, for a much smaller fee, place a bet on any number to appear in the lottery drawing of his choice. This was known as "insuring" a number.

The custom began in the lottery shops of London sometime during the first half of the eighteenth century. The clerks who took the bets and the runners who went into the taverns and coffee houses drumming up business were called insurance solicitors. The receipts they gave their customers became known as insurance policies, and the game was eventually called policy.

Policy arrived in the thirteen colonies with lotteries, but it did not become a big business until the lotteries themselves began to expand. By the early 1800s, insurance policies were an accepted part of every lottery and there were shops that sold nothing but policy tickets. It quickly became the most corrupt part of the system. Policy was run strictly for private gain; no matter how worthy the cause for which a lottery was conducted, none of the money made on policy tickets ever went to the beneficiary.

Worse yet, the operators of policy shops were regularly involved in tampering with lottery results. Sometimes their aim was to make sure that favored customers won; other times it was to make sure that nobody won, so they could avoid parting with their profits. In either case the policy operators had to figure out a way to select the proper number. But unless they were in cahoots with the lottery operators, there was always the risk of a slip-up.

In the late 1820s a group of New York policy operators tried to rig a lottery in Jersey City which they knew was carelessly run. The New Yorkers bribed one of the lottery's employees to steal the number 44. He was to conceal it in his sleeve, then slide it out when the drawing began and pretend it was the first number pulled from the wheel.

The conspirators insured the number 44 in every policy shop in New York. In all there was about $30,000 riding on the success of their plot. Unfortunately, the lottery employee never succeeded in stealing the number, and with the day of the drawing fast approaching, something had to be done quickly. The

New Yorkers decided to make a duplicate of the number and take a chance that the real 44 would not be drawn.

The duplicate was safely concealed in the young man's sleeve and he had no trouble making it appear that the counterfeit number had actually been drawn from the drum. But several other numbers were also drawn, and one of them was the genuine 44.

The managers of the Jersey City lottery and their dishonest employee were fired on the spot. The policy shops canceled their insurance policies and a new and more carefully supervised drawing was scheduled. Ironically, the first number drawn in the new lottery was none other than 44.

For years, policy was no more than a minor, but lucrative, sideline of the lottery business; but as the lotteries gradually were outlawed, policy became more widespread. For a long while insurance was taken out on the New Jersey lotteries, which managed to remain alive longer than those in most other states. After the Civil War, when the New Jersey legislature finally made lotteries illegal, policy operators began paying on the numbers drawn in the Louisiana Lottery or in the Kentucky Literature Lottery. The results of the drawings were telegraphed to every major city in the country and delivered by runners to the policy shops. Bettors knew whether they had won or lost within an hour after the drawings had taken place.

There were more than a half-dozen kinds of bets that a policy player could make. The simplest bet was a day number—any number from one to seventy-eight

1867 newspaper cartoon of a policy office.

that appeared in any of the drawings—with odds of five to one. A station number, which had to be drawn in a specific position (first, or perhaps last), had odds of sixty to one. A player who won was said to have "hit," a term used in policy as far back as 1840 and still used in the numbers today.

Gambling operators are always on the lookout for the clever, mathematically oriented player who tries to work out a system to beat the house. In policy, this was impossible. The patterns and statistics of lottery drawings defied analysis. As a result, policy players tended to rely on fortune tellers, hunches, or dream books rather than mathematical systems to provide them with clues about what number to play.

As early as 1805, the Pennsylvania legislature passed a law against lottery insurance. Other states began to pass similar laws. Only one—Louisiana—did not out-

law policy but actually encouraged it. The proceeds from policy sales paid all the expenses of the Louisiana Lottery Company, which meant that the money raised by selling lottery tickets was clear profit.

Outside of Louisiana, policy operators became experts at evading the law. They made so much money that they could easily pay police and politicians to ignore them. In most cities policy dealers made no attempt to conceal their operations. They advertised by displaying piles of gold and silver coins in their windows. After the California gold rush, nuggets from the newly opened mines were used.

Thanks to a combination of public apathy and political corruption, the policy-shop owners had a clear field. The most ambitious among them become millionaires. One of the first of these policy kings was a New Yorker named Zachariah Simmons, who controlled all policy operations as far west as Milwaukee and as far south as Richmond, Virginia. Simmons called his arrangement the Central Organization, and he ran it like a legitimate corporation. His profits would have made many a businessman envious. In three years—from 1872 to 1875—the proceeds from twenty cities, including Chicago, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, amounted to over one million dollars.

Simmons regularly rigged the Kentucky lotteries on which the winning numbers were based, but cheating policy players was raised to a high art by his successor, Albert J. Adams. A former brakeman on the New Haven Railroad, Adams quit railroading to work as a runner in one of Simmons's policy shops. Before long

he started a string of policy shops on his own, and branched out into running roulette wheels, chuck-a-luck games and faro banks—all crooked. But policy was his major interest.

Al Adams simplified Simmons's system of picking policy winners by not even bothering with a lottery drawing—although he solemnly insisted that two were held every day, one in Frankfort and the second in Louisville, Kentucky. He embellished the story by adding that the numbers were drawn from the wheel by a blindfolded child.

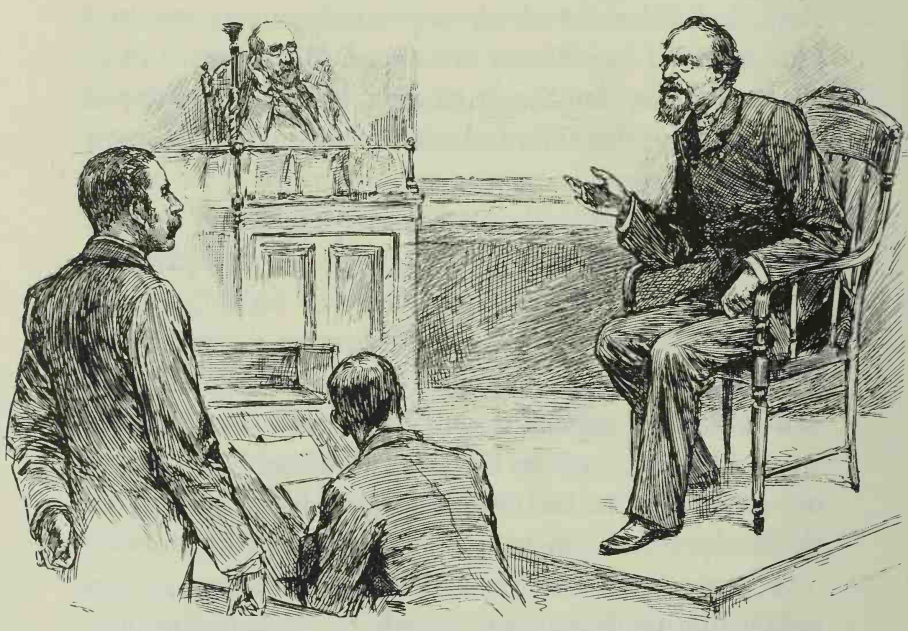
The two lotteries actually were held in Kentucky, but the winning numbers were never relayed to New York. Instead a set of phoney numbers was selected by Adams or one of his henchmen. They made their choice by checking the numbers that had been played and selecting the ones on which the smallest amount had been wagered.

In addition to being an out-and-out cheat, Adams also had a reputation for being the meanest gambler in New York. He paid low salaries to his employees, had few friends, and was never known to give away anything except his umbrella. Like most gamblers, he was incredibly superstitious. He was convinced that it was bad luck to use an umbrella that had been rained on, so as soon as his umbrella got wet he gave it to the first person he met.

Al Adams went to great lengths to make sure his policy ring could operate outside the law, but he had not reckoned on the forces of religion. In 1892, a New York clergyman, the Reverend Dr. Charles H. Park-

hurst, launched a crusade against vice and corruption in New York City. He asserted that Tammany Hall, the Democratic political machine that controlled the city, was not only aware of the existence of policy shops, gambling houses, and similar "dens of vice," but shared their profits.

Parkhurst's accusations resulted in the formation of a special committee of the state legislature which undertook a sweeping investigation of the relationships between gamblers, politicians and police. In the wake of the investigation, Adams was arrested. For once his long-time friendships with the politicians who



The Reverend Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst testifying before the Sixth Judicial Court of New York, April 21, 1892.

ruled New York did not help him. Adams was convicted. Although his friends arranged to let him live with two deputy sheriffs at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel until he was sentenced, he spent eighteen months in Sing Sing prison. When he returned to New York, his health was broken and he was deeply depressed. On October 1, 1906, Adams died of a self-inflicted bullet wound in the head.

Parkhurst and his associates had succeeded where state and city governments had failed. As a result of their crusade, all the policy shops in New York closed down, and no more policy kings emerged to run the business on a national scale. By the beginning of World War I, policy was extinct; but a new and not very different game—the numbers—was about to take its place.

The numbers, or *bolita* as it is sometimes called, is believed to have started in Harlem in the early 1900s. It was a small gambling game that involved betting on the final three digits of the nine- or ten-figure daily totals announced by the New York Clearing House, the institution where banks settle their claims against each other. Tickets cost a dime and there was only one prize. The person who got all three numbers correct won about $300.

The numbers game might have continued on a small scale, earning a few dollars for its operators and providing some diversion for its participants, but the repeal of prohibition in 1932 created an unemployment problem for the racketeers who had been selling illegal whiskey. One bootlegger, Arthur Flegenheimer—bet-

ter known as Dutch Schultz—seized on the numbers game as a new way to make money.

With the help of a squad of strong-arm men, Schultz took over the game and turned it into a racket. He set up numbers operations in cities all over the country. Numbers tickets, which are still called policy slips, could be bought at candy stores, newsstands, and barbershops; runners made the rounds of offices and factories or let it be known that they could be found on certain street corners.

Numbers slips and pages from a dreambook. Dreambooks are used like dictionaries. The player looks up specific dream images and puts money on the numbers listed for them.

Al Adams had specialized in reporting phoney winning numbers. Dutch Schultz went a step further and rarely announced any winners at all. Anyone who complained was left to the mercy of his goons. If interest in the game began to slack off in a particular area, however, Schultz would announce a few winners and business would improve.

In 1935, Dutch Schultz was gunned down in one of the gang wars that are so common in the world of crime. The numbers racket he created remains one of the underworld's principal sources of income, but it is no longer controlled by one man. Instead, the country is divided into territories, with one of the families of organized crime in charge of each territory.

The numbers game as it exists today is a large and well-coordinated business. Books of numbered tickets are distributed by agents through runners, another group of runners collects the money for the agents; still another collects the receipts or policy slips. The three separate operations are designed to confuse the police and forestall arrest. In order to prove that a numbers game is being played, the police must find both the policy slips and the money in the same location. With this system, they rarely do.

As a further precaution, policy slips are made of a special type of lightweight paper that can be folded and hidden under a ring or watch or destroyed quickly at the touch of a lighted cigarette.

In one respect, at least, the organized crime families are more honest than the policy kings of the past. The winning numbers are now a set of publicly available

figures that no one can control. The sources vary; for a while they were the final three digits of the balance figures of the nearest stock exchange. More often they are the last digits of the amounts paid to the winning bettors on three specific races at a predetermined track.

Numbers players can bet on any three-digit number between 000 and 999. The odds against winning are a thousand to one, but the person who wins is not paid at those odds. The runners who take the bets, the agents who supervise the operation, and the criminals who control it all get a share of the profits. By the time they have taken their percentages, the winners can expect to be paid about 540 to 1, a return of fifty-four dollars on a ten-cent bet.

Most numbers players bet much more than a dime; some bet it every day for years without ever winning a cent. But despite crackdowns, investigations, and occasional arrests, the game goes on. Organized crime thrives on the money it brings in, numbers players enjoy their dreams of hitting the jackpot, and the rest of the population is too busy with other things to care.

MONTE CARLO

People sometimes wonder if anyone gets rich from gambling. The answer is yes—if they are smart enough to let other people do the gambling. This was proven by François Blanc, the man who created Monte Carlo. When Blanc died in 1877, he left a fortune of $14 million, most of it made from other people's bad luck.

Monte Carlo is the world's best-known gambling center. It was started to make money not only for François Blanc, but for Monaco, where Monte Carlo is located. The country, which occupies some 400 acres along the French Riviera, is an independent state that has been ruled by the princes of the Grimaldi family since 1297.

Over the centuries, wars and political upheavals kept carving away slices of the Grimaldis' territory. The final blow came in 1861, when a treaty between France and Austria took away two of Monaco's largest

Bettors gathered two deep around a roulette table at Monte Carlo, 1890.

townships—about four-fifths of the country—and reduced it to its present vest-pocket size.

Monaco's ruler, Prince Charles II, realized that something drastic had to be done if his country were to survive. He contacted Blanc, who with his twin brother, Louis, had turned the almost bankrupt German town of Homburg into a thriving health and gambling resort. The prince hoped Blanc could do the same for Monaco.

Blanc was convinced that he could. He hired the architect of the Paris Opéra, Charles Garnier, to design an opulent casino. Next came a rail line and highway to make Monaco accessible to the rest of Europe.

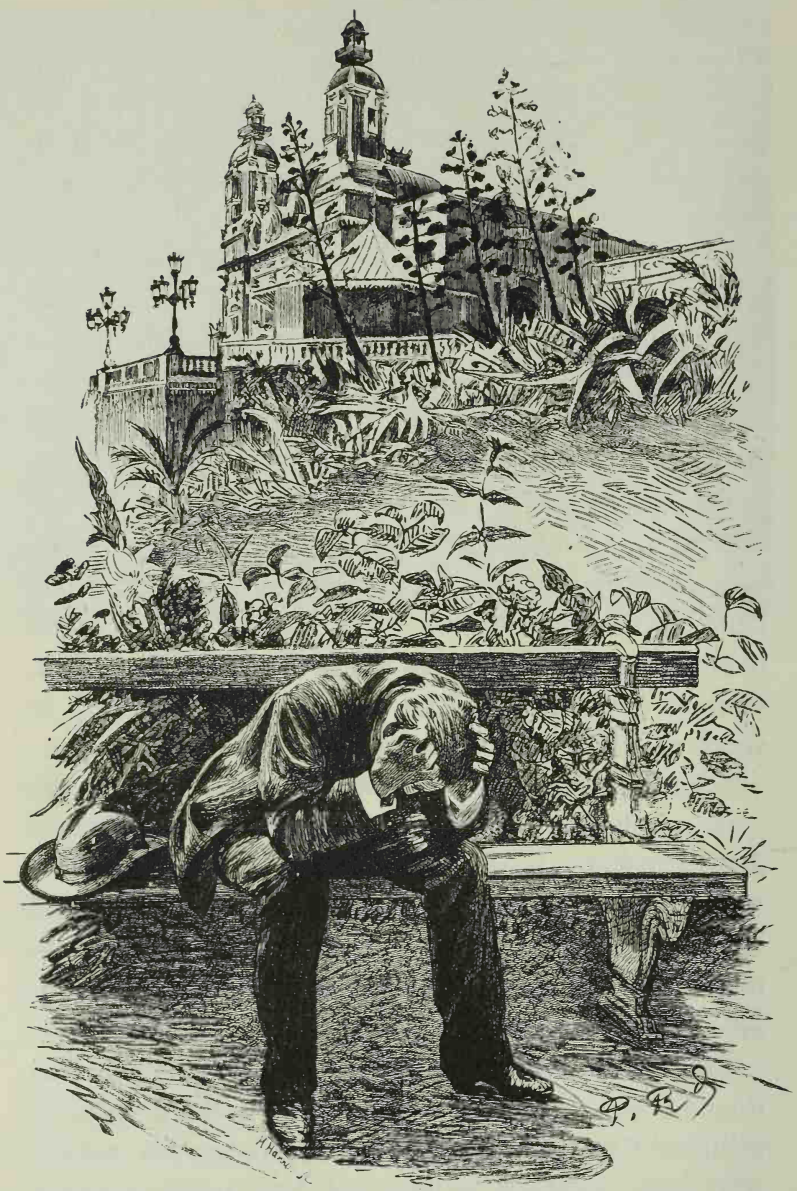
Blanc built a splendid hotel, laid out roads and gardens, and virtually created a new town within the state of Monaco. In 1866, Prince Charles decreed that it be called Monte (after the surrounding mountains) Carlo (after himself).

Blanc went to great lengths to see that Monte Carlo was run with dignity. One of his major worries was suicide. Jealous of Monaco's success, hotel owners at the other Riviera resorts spread rumors that its beaches were littered with bodies of bankrupt gamblers. The rumors were false, but more than one despairing patron did try to take his own life.

A former croupier at Monte Carlo told how Blanc was strolling through the gardens one day when he came upon a man about to shoot himself. Blanc rushed over and angrily shook his fist in the man's face. "Sir, you are no gentleman," he exclaimed. "If you wish to shoot yourself, go home and do it; not here!"

Sometimes the losers tried to kill themselves at the gaming tables. When this happened, the croupiers had instructions to press a special button. Six men from Blanc's "suicide squad" would appear at once and whisk the body away. A seventh man would slip into the victim's place and the game would continue uninterrupted.

Blanc was less concerned about avoiding suicides than he was about having reports of them ruin his business. He had private investigators on his payroll who were assigned to find out how much a heavy gambler could afford to lose. When the man reached his limit a casino employee would discreetly advise



"Despair" is the title of this 1886 Harper's Bazaar *illustration of an unsuccessful gambler at Monte Carlo.*

him that it would be best if he left Monte Carlo at once. To speed the gambler on his way his luggage would be packed, his hotel bill paid, and his train ticket purchased. He would then be escorted to the railroad station and his train watched until it disappeared across the border.

After his father's death in 1877, Camille Blanc took over the management of Monte Carlo. The younger Blanc built an opera house and theater, expanded the casino, and added a *salle privée*, a special room where only the wealthiest bettors were allowed to play. It was during Camille Blanc's stewardship that an English gambler and sometime swindler named Charles Wells became famous as "the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo."

Wells arrived in Monte Carlo in 1891 with $20,000 and started playing roulette. Amazingly, he won almost every time. One evening he had such a fantastic streak of luck that for the first time in Monte Carlo's history the croupier ran out of money and had to send to the casino's vaults for more. The story quickly spread that Wells had broken the bank.

The gambler stayed in Monte Carlo all season and continued to win huge sums of money. Suspicious, Blanc put private investigators on his trail; they found no evidence of fraud. Wells left in the spring and returned the following winter. Everywhere he went he was followed by throngs of admirers. On his first night of play, he bet on his favorite number—five—and won spectacularly. But then, just as mysteriously as he had

won, Wells began to lose. He kept losing and finally left Monte Carlo, never to return.

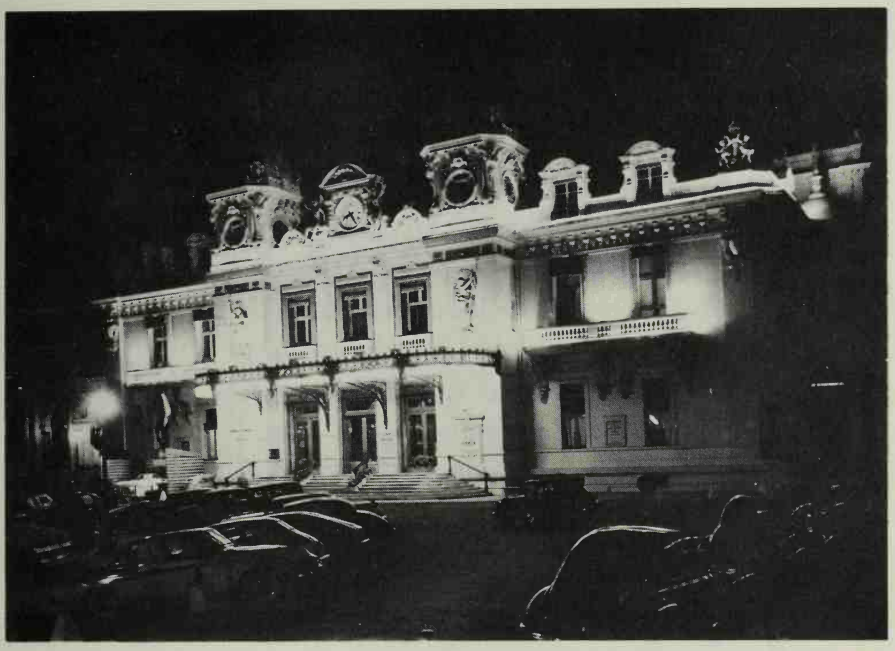
The Englishman's winning streak had given an enormous boost to Monte Carlo's reputation. People flocked to the casino and gambled away millions in their efforts to imitate Wells's example and break the bank. The bank, of course, had not been broken in the first place and it simply grew richer.

In 1947 business started to fall off at Monte Carlo, and its director-general began looking for ways to attract new customers. He and his chief croupier visited the United States to master the American game of craps. Elevated from back alleys and barrooms and rechristened *les craps*, the game made its debut at Monte Carlo with great fanfare. It has been a mainstay of the casino's business ever since.

Today the ruler of Monaco is Prince Rainier III, whose wife is the former American movie actress Grace Kelly. François Blanc's original casino, now known as the Winter Casino, still stands. There is also a Summer Casino, and additional gaming tables can be found at the International Sporting Club.

One section of the Winter Casino, known as the Kitchen, caters to tourists in casual attire who play for modest stakes. In the other rooms the mood is more formal and the bets are often in the neighborhood of $2000.

Monte Carlo's croupiers spend several months being trained for their jobs. They learn the correct way to throw the ball around a roulette wheel, how to shuffle and deal cards, and, most important, how to detect



Floodlights illuminate the ornate facade of the main casino at Monte Carlo.

cheaters. The croupiers must speak at least one language besides French. They must also be impervious to excitement, be able to calculate odds in a matter of seconds, and remember who owns the chips that are placed on their tables.

To protect both the players and the casino, Monte Carlo has strict security regulations. Every morning before the tables open, the roulette wheels are inspected to make sure they are correctly balanced and the equipment at the card tables is checked to see that it has not been tampered with. As an added precaution, croupiers are not allowed to associate with pa-

trons outside of the casinos and are forbidden to talk to strangers.

To guard against robberies, teams of plainclothes detectives keep an eye on the gaming tables and on the millions of dollars stored in the casino's bank. In addition, each croupier has an emergency button within easy reach. One push propels the contents of his cash box directly into a basement vault.

Monte Carlo employs security men to study the faces of the guests and turn away anyone who has been caught cheating, welshing on bets, or otherwise misbehaving. One man who had the job for many years claimed that he could recognize 60,000 regular customers and knew at least half that number by name. His secret was not in memorizing their features, height, or weight, but in studying the way they walked—a trait that few people ever change.

Monte Carlo is by no means the only gambling center in Europe. London has a number of exclusive gambling clubs. France has casinos at Deauville on the Normandy coast and Cannes on the Mediterranean. Germany has the Kursaal at Baden-Baden, which is the oldest casino in Europe. It was founded over two hundred years ago.

Nevertheless, Monte Carlo is the one place synonymous with gambling all over the world. Even when they lose, the people who gamble there can tell themselves they have lost in style.

AMERICA'S MONTE CARLOS

The United States has always had at least one major gambling center. New Orleans was the first. Gambling arrived with the French colonists in 1718, and for a long time gaming tables were a regular feature of every coffee house, tavern, and grogshop. However, the free and easy attitude of the port city soon took its toll. Drunkenness, bankruptcies, and brawls were common, and occasionally there was a murder when someone tried to welsh on a bet.

Eventually the residents of New Orleans became disgusted and in 1823 the city agreed to limit itself to six gambling houses. John Davis, a well-educated, French-speaking emigré from Haiti, owned the most famous of the six. His Palace of Fortune set the style for first-class gambling houses all over the country.

Convinced that gamblers liked to play in elegant surroundings, Davis decorated his "palace" with thick carpets, gold-framed mirrors, velvet-upholstered fur-

niture, and crystal chandeliers. He also served fine food and drink without charge, a clever move, since alcohol tended to make his guests play more freely.

Professional gamblers from New Orleans fanned out along the Gulf Coast to Mobile, Alabama, and up the Mississippi River to Natchez, St. Louis, and Memphis. They also found their way into Ohio and Kentucky. But it was Washington, D.C., that became New Orleans's chief rival as a gambling center. The gamblers were already on hand when Congress met for the first time in the new federal city in 1800.

In 1832 a well-mannered and apparently well-bred Virginian named Edward Pendleton opened the capital's most famous gambling house. Pendleton called it a palace of fortune, but it was better known around Washington as the Hall of the Bleeding Heart.

Pendleton's splendidly furnished rooms, excellent food, and abundance of drink—all free—could not help but appeal to congressmen living in drab hotels and boardinghouses. The Hall of the Bleeding Heart became a favorite meeting place for politicians. Not surprisingly, lobbyists were the second largest group of guests.

The lobbyists rarely gambled, but they always had money to lend and were quick to cover a congressman's debts. They also made it known that repayment could be made in the form of votes or influence favorable to the interests they represented.

As a result of his gambling enterprise Edward Pendleton became an immensely wealthy man and a respectable one as well. When he died in 1858, several

A youthful portrait of John "Old Smoke" Morrissey. Morrissey retired from the ring after fighting the son of a longtime enemy of his father's and winning a side bet of $5000.

members of Congress were among his pallbearers, and President Buchanan attended the funeral.

Although New York eventually had thousands of public gambling houses, the first one did not open until 1825. It was a far cry from its carpeted counterparts in New Orleans and Washington. There were a few tables for dice and cards and the patrons were mostly tradesmen, clerks, and volunteer firemen.

Over the next ten years, a series of citizens' uprisings in Louisiana, Kentucky, and Ohio resulted in the closing of local gambling houses and hordes of exiled gamblers came swarming into New York. By 1850 the city had a complete range of gambling houses, from palaces of fortune for the upper classes to penny poker dens where a plank laid across a pair of whiskey barrels served as the table and a candle stuck in a bottle provided the light.

New York developed into an even bigger gambling center after the Civil War, when it became the financial headquarters of a rapidly expanding nation. The

men who had made fortunes building railroads and owning factories, steel mills, and coal mines were gamblers by instinct. In addition, they had so much money that they could afford to play for incredible stakes.

During and just after the Civil War the most prominent gambling house owner in New York was the former heavyweight boxer John "Old Smoke" Morrissey. In keeping with the tradition set by John Davis in New Orleans and Edward Pendleton in Washington, Morrissey provided his clients with every comfort. Liveried servants staffed the dining room and the tables were set with fine china, silver, and glassware.

Considering his professional background, John Morrissey managed to acquire a remarkable collection of wealthy and influential friends. He helped persuade Cornelius Vanderbilt and his associates to build the racetrack at Saratoga in 1863 and he played a major role in turning Saratoga into one of the country's leading gambling resorts.

Not long after the racetrack was opened, Morrissey bought a house in the center of town and turned it into a duplicate of one of his New York gambling palaces. Business was so good that he set his sights on turning Saratoga into an American Monte Carlo. He bought thirty acres of land and built a sumptuous red brick casino which he surrounded with formal gardens, broad lawns, and avenues of trees.

Although not particularly genteel himself, Morrissey insisted on correct behavior at his Club House. On one occasion, Big Jim Fisk, a Civil War profiteer and stock

manipulator who was also the colonel of a New York National Guard regiment, arrived in Saratoga with his regimental band in tow. Morrissey refused to allow him anywhere near the racetrack or the Club House. Big Jim hastily departed for Long Branch, New Jersey —Saratoga's chief rival as a gambling resort—where the powers that be were not so stuffy.

In addition to his gambling enterprises, Morrissey had a successful political career. He was elected to two terms in Congress and another in the New York State legislature.

John Morrissey's successor as the leading gambling house operator in New York was an enigmatic man named Richard Canfield. Born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, Canfield worked as a clerk at various hotels along the eastern seaboard; but he enjoyed making money, and he was quick to see that for a man with only a grammar school education and no particular talent, running a gambling house was the quickest way to do it.

Canfield arrived in New York around 1886 and opened a small poker room. Before long he was the owner of the most exclusive casino in the city, and perhaps the world. The visitors to Canfield's included Vanderbilts, Whitneys, and other rich and socially prominent men of the era. Canfield was reluctant to admit anyone who could not afford to play—and lose —heavily. An evening at the casino was expected to begin with the purchase of $500 worth of chips. A gambler who bought less was quietly informed that he would not be welcome to return.

John "Bet a Million" Gates was a frequent visitor at Canfield's. Gates once lost $150,000 playing faro there but insisted on playing until he won it back. Canfield had a limit on the amount he would let players lose, but he waived it for Gates. The faro game finally ended at 3 A.M. with the millionaire winning back his original $150,000 plus $150,000 more.

In 1894, sixteen years after John Morrissey's death, Canfield bought his Club House at Saratoga. Canfield made the casino even more elaborate than it had been in Morrissey's day, but he continued to observe Morrissey's rules: women and local residents were not permitted in the gaming rooms and regular and generous contributions were given to local churches, hospitals, and orphanages. Vigilance and charity of this sort were good business. They helped to ward off any suspicions that gambling was not good for Saratoga.

The Club House was open only during the racing season. Richard Canfield spent the rest of the year in New York. His last and most expensively furnished casino was in a townhouse on East 44th Street just off Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. Canfield spent over a million dollars remodeling and decorating it. The furnishings included a rare set of twelve chairs made by the English cabinetmaker Thomas Chippendale and a collection of paintings by the noted artist James McNeill Whistler. Canfield and Whistler were friends and the artist had painted the gambler's portrait. The picture is a fascinating study of a shadowy, slightly sinister figure. Whistler called it "His Reverence."

In 1904 a crusading district attorney, William Tra-

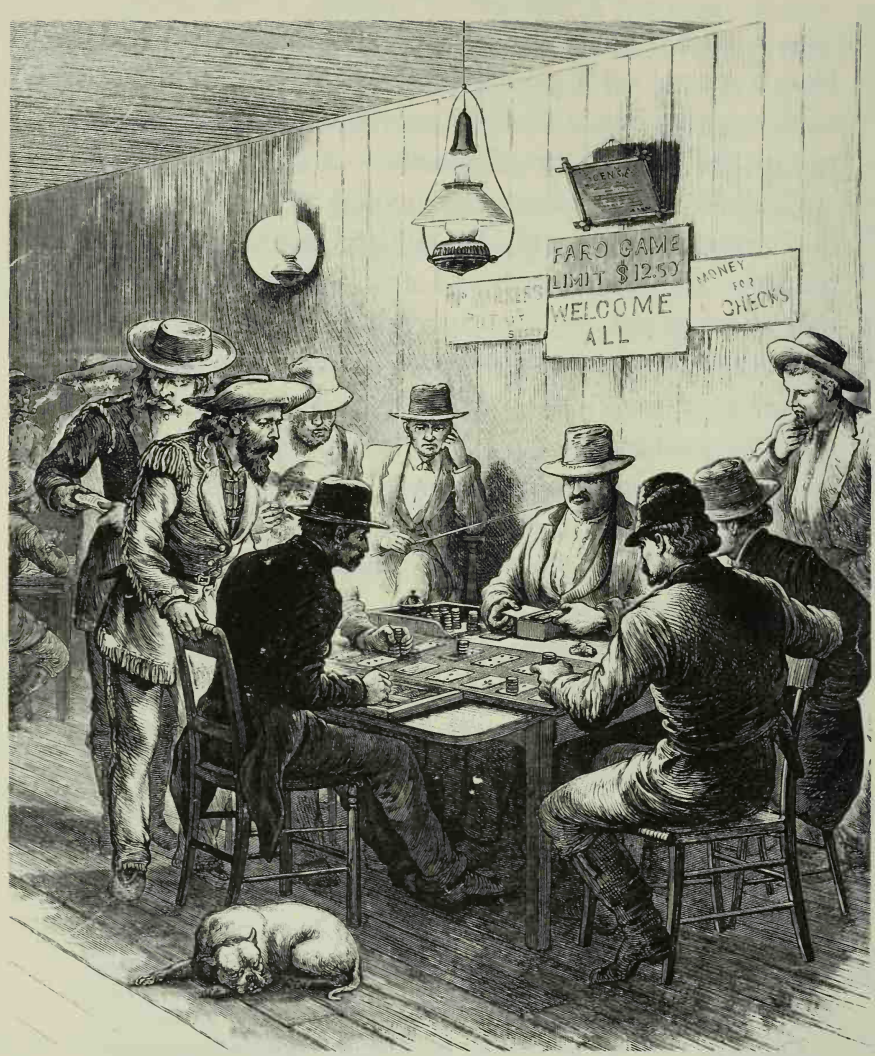
vers Jerome, forced Canfield to close the doors of his New York casino. A similar crackdown in Saratoga led to the closing of the Club House. It is now a museum run by the local historical society.

Canfield was subsequently invited to open casinos in Europe, Havana, and Mexico City, but he retired to his New York townhouse and devoted his time to his collections of art, antiques, and rare books.

Richard Canfield had a reputation that was unusual in his line of work: he ran honest games. The gambling operator maintained that there was no need to cheat because the odds were always in favor of the house. Proof of how good the odds were is evidenced by the fact that he amassed a fortune which totaled $12 million at its peak.

As the United States moved westward, gambling moved with it. Chicago had barely been incorporated as a town in 1833 when its first resident clergyman was preaching against gambling. His sermons had little effect. Chicago became a first-class gambling town and remained so despite every effort at reform. Chicago gamblers became adept at outwitting the forces of law and order and originated the traveling, or floating, game, in which the players move to a new location after every round to avoid the police.

Chicago's most colorful gambling house operator was Michael McDonald, who started hoodwinking the public as a teenager in the mid-1850s. McDonald worked the trains that came through Chicago. As soon as one of them pulled into the station the young man would rush through the cars selling "prize packages."



Gambling house in Cheyenne, Wyoming, 1877. This drawing was one of a series commissioned by Leslie's Weekly *newspaper. The artist traveled to California on the transcontinental railroad and sketched each stop on the journey so that readers could see what life was like in the wild West.*

He would pocket his money and hop off the train before his customers discovered that the packages they had just bought were empty.

By the time he was in his forties McDonald had raised enough money from his various schemes to buy several gambling houses. The biggest and fanciest one, which he called the Store, became a meeting place for millionaires and politicians. With their help and the profits from his gambling operations, McDonald made some shrewd investments in real estate, elevated lines, and similar businesses and died a millionaire.

Although Mike McDonald often boasted that he treated all of his customers honestly, it was generally acknowledged that he was honest only with his friends and with players who were smart enough to know they were being cheated. In Mike's eyes anyone else was a sucker and deserved to be separated from his money.

The California gold rush in 1849 turned San Francisco into a town with two obsessions: making a fortune and gambling it away. San Francisco's first gambling house, the Eldorado, was a canvas tent with sawdust on the floor. It was open all day and all night and was so crowded that people had to wait in line to play. Within a few years there were over a thousand New Orleans–style gambling houses along the Barbary Coast, the city's lawless waterfront area named after the pirate coast of North Africa.

One of the biggest operators in San Francisco, Bill Briggs, had an unusual superstition. He was convinced that any coin smaller than a silver dollar was unlucky. Every morning at 4 A.M. when he closed down the

house, Briggs collected all the small change that had appeared on his tables during the night. In bad weather he tossed it out in the street; in good, he walked over to a nearby produce market and distributed it among the workers.

In the nineteenth century, the United States had two types of gambling houses: carpet joints and sawdust joints. The carpet joints were in the big cities; the sawdust joints were in frontier towns like Abilene, Kansas; Cheyenne, Wyoming; Virginia City, Nevada; and Tombstone, Arizona. Their patrons included miners, railroad workers, cavalry troops, and cowboys, as well as the usual collection of adventurers and drifters who turned up everywhere in the old West.

The gambling houses on the frontier could be dangerous. When the games got dull at the Denver House in Colorado, the patrons livened things up by taking potshots at the bartender. If a player was caught cheating it was standard practice to take him out and shoot or hang him on the spot. Every Wild West town had its Boot Hill cemetery, the graveyard set aside for men who died with their boots on—that is, by violence. Many of them were gamblers. In Dodge City, Kansas, one wit carved the following message on a cheater's tombstone:

PLAYED FIVE ACES
NOW PLAYING A HARP

Professional gamblers were highly respected in the West—as long as they were honest. The professionals

dressed like clergymen in black frock coats and ties, and often served as law enforcement officers. One frontier gambler, Wyatt Earp, was made chief deputy marshal of Dodge City in 1876.

In most towns, the gambling houses as well as the gamblers were put to more respectable uses. They were places where men collected their mail and read the latest newspapers from back East. Occasionally a gambling house served as a court or church, in which case the bar was closed and the games suspended.

Women were a rare sight in the frontier cowtowns and mining camps, and gambling house proprietors soon caught on to the fact that a female dealer was an excellent way to improve business. San Francisco had Kitty the Schemer, who called herself the Queen of the Gamblers. In Santa Fe, Gertrudes de Barcelo, better known as La Tules, owned her own chain of exclusive gambling houses. She did an especially lively business during the Mexican War, when Santa Fe served as headquarters for the American Army.

Poker Alice Tubbs, the widow of a mining engineer, supported herself as a professional gambler after her husband was killed in a mining accident. A smart poker player and a skilled faro dealer, Poker Alice smoked long black cigars, drank her whiskey straight —although not while gambling—and never failed to read her Bible on Sundays.

The most notorious of the female gamblers was a Frenchwoman who called herself Eleanor Dumont. She arrived in Nevada City, California, as a young woman in 1854 and opened a house that offered free

champagne and a single table of blackjack. Business was good and she soon added more tables and branched out into chuck-a-luck, poker, and faro.

When the gold mines in Nevada City began to peter out, Madame Dumont moved on. She traveled from one mining camp to another opening gambling houses all over the West. As the years wore on, her looks faded and she grew as coarse and tough as the men she gambled against. Her gambling houses, which once had been clean and well run, became as dirty and disreputable as she was. She became something of a public joke, and after a patch of dark hair appeared on her upper lip, the miners nicknamed her Madame Mustache. One night in 1879 a ring of professional gamblers broke the bank in a faro game Madame Mustache was operating at Bodie, California. The next morning her body was found on a road outside of town. She had committed suicide by drinking poison.

As the West became more civilized, the gambling houses shut down. Respectable people preferred to have schools and churches on their main streets. Even San Francisco succumbed to the pressures of reform and by 1911 the carpet joints along the Barbary Coast had all been put out of business.

The rest of the nation had become equally intolerant of gambling and of the vice and corruption that flourished wherever it was allowed. But despite the antigambling mood that prevailed in so much of the country, there were still a few places where gambling was either still legal or the laws were so loosely enforced that it might just as well have been.

One of the best-known gambling spots in the country during the early 1900s was Hot Springs, Arkansas, a resort that, like Saratoga Springs, was noted for its mineral waters. Hot Springs called itself the Monte Carlo of the Midwest. Its casinos featured faro, roulette, and poker games; there were slot machines everywhere; and bookmakers operated huge poolrooms where bets could be placed on any horse race in the country.

Hot Springs's rival for supremacy as a gambling resort was Palm Beach, Florida. The oil magnate Henry Flagler had been the first to see the Sunshine State's possibilities as a vacationland. He invested in real estate, bought a rail line, and started building a series of luxury hotels. Flagler, the son of a minister, built a church near every hotel but he also provided a casino for his more worldly guests.

When the Royal Poinciana Hotel opened in Palm Beach in 1894, Flagler named its casino the Beach Club and hired a professional gambler, Colonel Edward Bradley, to run it.

A good businessman and a personable host, Bradley soon bought the Beach Club and turned it into a popular and profitable place. Millions of dollars changed hands there each year during the three-month winter season. Bradley has the distinction of being the first gambling house owner to allow respectable women to play at his tables. He also had a reputation for running an honest and orderly house. Drunkenness was forbidden and the guests were required to wear evening clothes. There was never any scandal connected with

Las Vegas today. This casino is in the Monte Carlo Bar at the Sands Hotel.

the Beach Club and reformers left it alone. Even when Florida outlawed gambling, Palm Beach—and Bradley's—was quietly ignored.

Bradley made millions from his casino and he was never stingy about sharing it with others. He paid his employees well and when business was good—which it usually was—gave them a bonus at the end of each season. Every year he sponsored a race at his Kentucky horse farm and donated the proceeds to local orphanages. He also gave money to rebuild a number of Palm Beach churches after a disastrous hurricane in 1926 and financed the construction of St. Edward's Roman Catholic Church, where he regularly attended Sunday Mass.

Colonel Bradley died in 1946; his will ordered that the Beach Club be torn down and the roulette wheels and chuck-a-luck cages tossed into the sea. Bradley's death marked the end of Palm Beach's fame as a gambling resort, but on the opposite side of the continent a new and more glittering resort was beginning to emerge.

The state of Nevada had legalized gambling in 1931. At first Reno was the principal gambling city but it was soon overshadowed by Las Vegas, its neighbor to the south. The city, whose name is Spanish for "the meadows," was originally a rest stop for wagon trains traveling across the desert from Santa Fe to California. When the wagon trains disappeared it became a ranch; in 1905, when the railroad came through, it became a sleepy little town.

The same year that Nevada legalized gambling, the

federal government began constructing Hoover Dam, about thirty miles southeast of Las Vegas. The government built its own town, Boulder City, to house the construction workers and engineers. Gambling houses and liquor stores were forbidden in the government town so on weekends most of the population of Boulder City headed toward Las Vegas. The once sleepy town rapidly grew into a bustling community. Its economy was based on supplying the fun-seeking dam builders with everything they wanted in the way of nightlife.

When the Hoover Dam was completed, Las Vegas's boom years seemed to be at an end. Then in 1946 a California gangster named Bugsy Siegel rediscovered the town and started it on the road to fame. A few years earlier, Los Angeles had begun a major cleanup of illegal gambling operations and Siegel's livelihood was endangered. Eager to find a new base of operations, Siegel began looking to Las Vegas, which was close enough to California for him to keep his regular clientele, but safely over the Nevada state line so he would not run afoul of the law.

Concealing his connections with organized crime, Siegel bought some land and built the Flamingo Hotel. Las Vegas already had several hotels but none could compare with the Flamingo. It was large and luxurious, its grounds landscaped with imported shrubbery, artificial ponds, and live flamingos. Its principal attraction, however, was its casino.

About a year after the Flamingo opened, Bugsy Siegel was killed in a gangland slaying. The murder

prompted Nevada to take a firmer hand in licensing and regulating casino owners, but it did not stop the public from coming to Las Vegas. By 1956, a dozen luxury hotels had been built along "The Strip," a six-lane highway south of town. Today there are dozens more. The hotels all have swimming pools, restaurants, and nightclubs, but most people who go to Las Vegas go to gamble. The casinos are open seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. The only time the playing stops is for a half minute each year, at the first stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve.

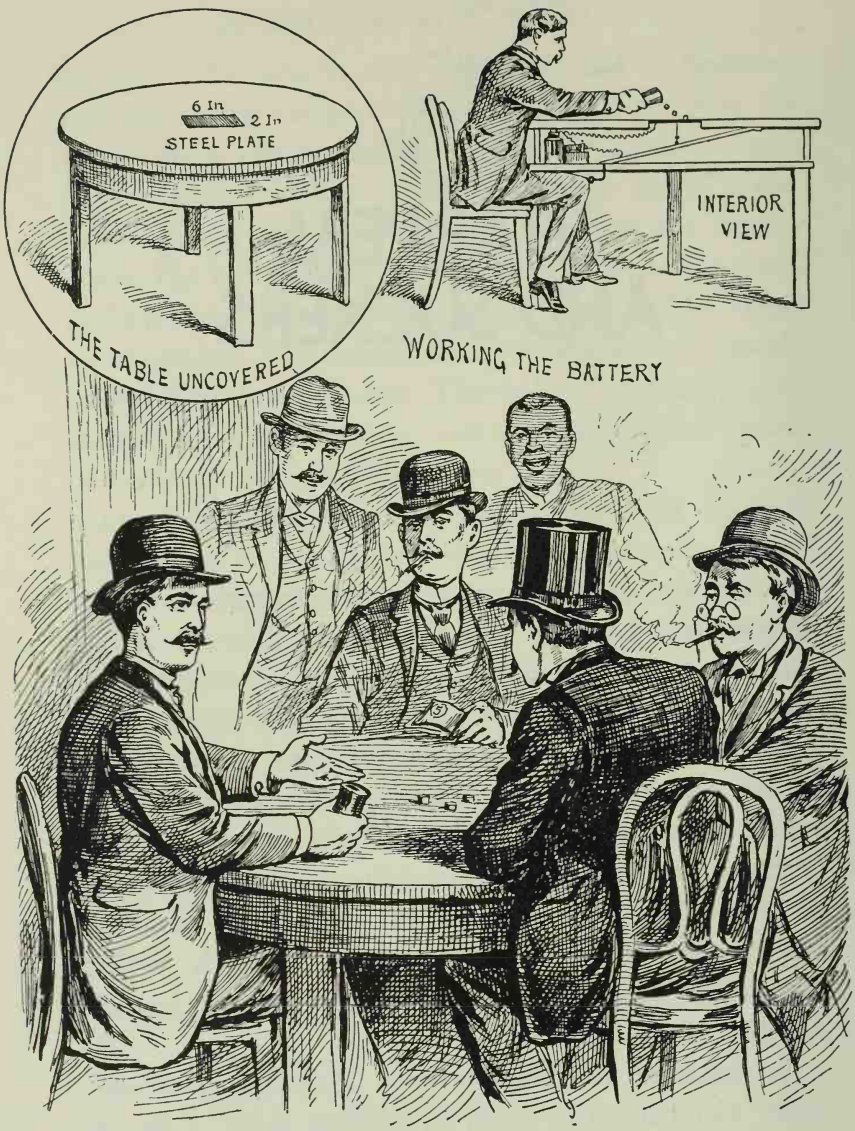
Las Vegas will soon have an eastern rival. In 1976 the citizens of New Jersey voted to allow casino gambling in Atlantic City as a way to revive the faded seaside resort and at the same time generate desperately needed dollars for the state's treasury. Other regions, including New York's Catskill Mountains and Pennsylvania's Poconos, may follow Atlantic City's example. If the trend continues, casinos may some day be as numerous as racetracks. The next challenge will be to see if they can be as carefully supervised.

SHARPERS AND SUCKERS

Nobody knows when gambling was invented, but it seems more than probable that cheating began at the same time. Loaded dice have been found in the excavations at Pompeii and unscrupulous card players date back to the fourteenth century. On their account most of the early playing cards had plain white backs on which cheaters' marks could easily be detected.

There are few forms of gambling in which cheating is impossible. Slot machines can be rigged. Roulette wheels can be made with magnets or barely visible needles that draw the ball in or keep it out of certain compartments.

Professional card cheats have a variety of tricks. They can mark the cards by adding spots, lines, or scratches to the designs on the back. They can shuffle and deal dishonestly or they can work with an accomplice who will lurk on the fringes of the game and use signals to let them know which cards the other players are holding.



A loaded dice table. The caption for this nineteenth-century cartoon reads: "Electricity's service in fleecing the modern sucker—the inwardness of big winnings in a dice game."

Most sharpies or sharpers, as cheaters are often called, are sleight-of-hand artists. They are adept at palming (concealing in the palm of the hand) real dice and substituting crooked ones; they know how to slip cards into a pocket or sleeve to be pulled out and played at the opportune moment. Some sleight-of-hand artists are so skillful that they can cheat on the toss of a coin. Their fingers are sensitive enough to tell which side the coin has landed on. If it is not the side they called, they can turn it over without being detected and win the toss.

One game that lends itself easily to cheating is the shell game, a term that has become a synonym for fraud. No one knows when the shell game was invented, but it was played in China in the third century B.C. and in Greece in the second century A.D. Three hollow shells were placed on a table and a pebble or pea was concealed under one of them. The shells were then moved around very rapidly and the player had to guess which one contained the pebble. Usually none of them did. The operator's trick was to deftly remove the pebble, then to return it just as deftly after the player had guessed the wrong shell.

Another version of the shell game, cups and balls, was played in Europe during the twelfth century. Three cups and two balls were used; the cups had false bottoms that made it easy to remove or replace the balls as needed.

When the shell game is played with cards, it is called find the lady, three-card monte, or simply the three-card trick. The operator places three cards—two

number cards and a queen—face down on a table, moves them around quickly and invites the player to select the queen. Although the cards can be moved so fast that the player cannot keep track of the queen, most operators simply palm the queen and substitute another card.

Three-card monte arrived in the United States from Mexico around 1820. Hundreds of sharpers made their living from this game. The usual system was to work with a partner, or capper, who pretended to be a stranger. The capper would play against the operator and win, thus fooling the bystanders into thinking winning was easy. When they tried it, however, the operator would palm the queen and they lost.

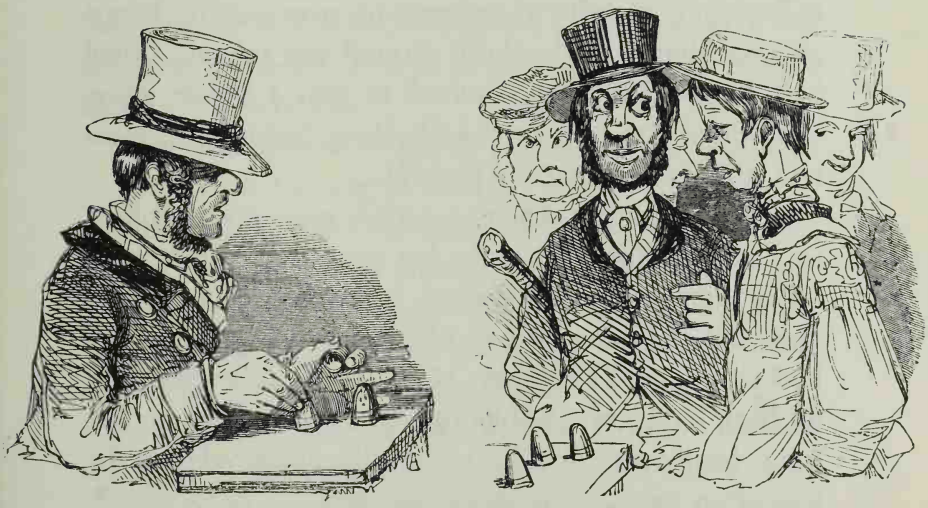
The shell game can be played with walnut shells or bottlecaps. During the eighteenth century thimbles were commonly used and dishonest operators were known as thimbleriggers. One of the earliest sharpers in the United States, a Shreveport, Louisiana, man who went by the name of Dr. Bennett, became known as the king of the thimbleriggers. Bennett began his career some time during the 1790s and continued until the 1840s, when he was well over seventy years old. He duped so many people that on his account no less than four Southern states passed laws against thimble-rigging.

The steamboats that operated on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers were a gold mine for dishonest gamblers. Travelers generally had time on their hands and money in their pockets and could easily be enticed into a game of cards. The sharpers who operated during the

early days of steamboat travel had to be cautious. If a passenger accused a man of cheating, the captain would immediately put into shore and order him off the boat. More than a few sharpers found themselves stranded on lonely riverbanks miles from any town.

In those days dishonest gamblers were detested by everyone. When eleven persons were scalded to death in a steamboat explosion in 1817, a witness reported that one victim, a gambler, was buried separately from the rest.

As steamboat traffic increased, the captains became less protective of their passengers' pocketbooks. Although a few refused to let cardsharps operate on board, others not only tolerated them but shared in their winnings.



The shell game. Cartoon from an 1847 issue of the Illustrated London News.

By 1845 there were over five hundred first-class liners carrying freight and passengers along America's navigable rivers. Each had a social hall or main saloon, a gathering place for male travelers where, in addition to drinking and conversation, there were always a few games of cards. A dishonest gambler had no trouble finding an unwary victim and walking off with all his cash.

One of the cleverest of the riverboat sharpers was George Devol. A skillful actor, he had several roles designed to win the confidence of potential suckers. One was his rich planter act. Devol would arrive at the steamboat dock wearing an embroidered waistcoat and diamond stickpin and smoking an expensive cigar. His luggage would be carried by a retinue of black dockworkers he had hired to pose as his slaves. After exchanging friendly greetings with everyone on board and flashing a fat bankroll around the saloon, Devol had no trouble being invited to join a poker game and, thanks to his various cheating techniques, even less trouble winning the jackpot.

In his late fifties, Devol married, gave up gambling, and settled down to write his memoirs, *Forty Years a Gambler on the Mississippi.* In his book, Devol estimated that in the course of his gambling career he had won over $2 million. Most of it was squandered on high living or gambled away. Devol was a sucker for a faro game and he cheerfully admitted that he was often taken in by other sharpers.

The riverboat gamblers were glib and charming and had an easy way of ingratiating themselves with

strangers. They dressed flashily, favoring ruffled shirts, heavy gold watches, and highly polished boots. Walking sticks were fashionable in that era and the sharpers lost no time in adopting them. Besides being the mark of a well-dressed man, the sticks could be held or twirled in different ways to signal an accomplice.

Several of the riverboat cardsharps worked with a man named James Ashby, who traveled the riverboats disguised as a slightly demented fiddler. Ashby would wander around the ship's saloon talking and playing tunes for the passengers. His audience had no way of knowing that every tune was a signal to the gamblers with whom Ashby worked.

One glaring exception to the rule of the well-dressed riverboat gambler was William "Canada Bill" Jones. A small, scruffy-looking man, Canada Bill wore clothes that were several sizes too big and shoes that were run down at the heels. His suits looked as if he slept in them—which he did.

Born in England of gypsy parents, Jones migrated to Canada at the age of twenty; after a few years of cheating Canadians he decided to try his luck on Americans. His gawky manner and foolish grin made him look more like a sucker than a sharper, but Canada Bill was a master at three-card monte. Another one of his specialties was the bent card trick.

Jones would turn his back on the cards and become involved in persuading someone in the crowd to play with him. Meanwhile an accomplice would bend one corner of the queen and hold it up for the crowd to see. By the time Canada Bill turned his attention back

to the game there were scores of players eager to put their money on the queen. When they turned over the card with the bent corner, however, it was never the queen. Canada Bill had surreptitiously straightened out the corner and bent another card.

Jones gave up riverboat gambling after the Civil War (when the sharpers began to outnumber their prey) and took to working the trains between Kansas City and Omaha. Jones was not the only sharper who operated on the railroads. At one point, so many travelers complained of being cheated that the railroads stopped selling playing cards on board their trains and warned their conductors to be on the lookout for known gamblers.

Undaunted, Canada Bill wrote to the president of the Union Pacific and offered him $10,000 a year for the exclusive right to operate on his trains. Jones even offered to limit his games to the two types of travelers he found easiest to fleece: traveling salesmen from Chicago and Methodist ministers. The railroad turned him down.

Canada Bill worked at racetracks and carnivals in the Midwest and eventually turned up in Chicago, where he bought several gambling houses. Although he made a great deal of money duping suckers, Jones gambled it all away. He died in a charity hospital in 1877 after losing $180,000 on the draw of a card. His friends said it was the only honest bet he had ever made.

Perhaps the most enterprising of the nineteenth-century sharpers was Elijah Skaggs, a tall, lean Ken-

A railroad sharper at work. 1873 wood engraving.

tuckian who looked like a pious preacher but whose real talent was palming cards. Skaggs left Kentucky as a young man and went to Nashville to make his fortune as a gambler. Faro had just been brought to the city by gamblers from New Orleans and Skaggs saw his chance to get in on a lucrative enterprise. Since the banker in a faro game controlled the order in which cards were drawn from the dealing box, the possibilities for cheating were endless.

Elijah Skaggs visited every faro bank in Nashville and studied the tricks the dealers used. If he found one he could not figure out, he would take the dealer aside and threaten to expose his dishonesty if he did not tell him what it was. Before long, Skaggs knew every trick in the trade and around 1830 he launched his career as a faro banker.

Once he saw how much one faro dealer could make, Skaggs quickly calculated that several dealers could make several times that amount. He recruited a group of bright young men and founded what amounted to a school for sharpers. He drilled his students until they were as skillful at manipulating a faro bank as he was. Then he sent them out on the road in the company of one of his many relatives—a brother, a cousin, or an in-law—who served as a combination accomplice and security guard.

At the peak of his career Elijah Skaggs had twenty-five faro dealers on his payroll. They were allowed to keep twenty-five percent of their profits; the rest went to their teacher and rapidly made him a millionaire. Skaggs invested his millions in stocks and real estate;

his holdings included a sugar plantation tended by two hundred slaves.

The Civil War bankrupted Skaggs. He took to running the Union blockade around New Orleans, smuggling in badly needed supplies and selling them for exorbitant prices. Skaggs accumulated a second fortune—some $3 million—which he invested in Confederate bonds. When the Confederacy was defeated, he was bankrupt once more. Skaggs wandered through Louisiana and Texas living by his wits and finally died, a destitute drunk, in 1870.

Dishonest faro banks provided profitable incomes for many nineteenth-century sharpers. A whole business was spawned that specialized in the manufacture of rigged boxes. Crooked games, known as brace games, could be found in most major cities and one or two usually opened up in a state capital whenever the legislature was scheduled to meet.

Brace game operators hired special employees, called ropers or steerers, who went out looking for "gulls." They usually found them in hotels, saloons, or railroad stations. The roper would strike up a conversation with the gull, have a few drinks, and then casually invite him over to his "club." The club was invariably a brace room or skinning house—a gambling house that specialized in crooked games. First-class skinning houses catered to only the most affluent suckers; second-class houses skinned the middle class.

The terms "skinning house" and "brace room" are obsolete, but cheating has not gone out of style. Thousands of professional sharpers still ply the trade. They

use many of the same techniques as the old riverboat gamblers and are equally skillful at deceiving their victims.

The big casinos are constantly on the lookout for cheaters. Some houses use television cameras to monitor the players; a few have ceilings that are specially designed so security guards can look down at the tables without being seen. Professional sharpers, however, are most apt to operate in the big-money dice and card games that take place in unlicensed casinos and after-hours clubs. But cheating can occur in any game—a private one among friends or a public one, like a bridge tournament, that is played for prestige rather than for money.

Even when they suspect they're being cheated, honest players find it hard to cope with the problem. It is difficult to accuse a friend and dangerous to accuse a stranger. During World War II the United States armed forces hired a gambling expert, John Scarne, to show servicemen how to avoid being fleeced by crooked games. Scarne's advice was simple: If you're suspicious, get out of the game.

Players who aren't suspicious but keep losing would be wise to get out too. If they aren't being victimized by a sharper, they may be cheating themselves by their lack of skill.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Sharpers make their living by gambling dishonestly. They are not to be confused with professionals, who also gamble for a living but rely on skill and luck rather than deception to win.

Professional gamblers know a lot about odds and percentages. If racing is their sport, they study horses, trainers, and jockeys. If cards are their specialty, they remember every card that has been played and can usually calculate which ones are in their opponents' hands. For the professionals, gambling is a way of life, but unless they have the good sense to run gambling houses, they rarely get rich. When they win, they pour their money back into gambling and inevitably wind up broke.

Because they play so often, the professionals' chances of winning are better than the average gambler's. By the same token, their chances of losing are greater too. One of the most famous professional

Nicholas Andrea "Nick the Greek" Dandalos in 1964.

gamblers of modern times, Nicholas Andrea Dandalos, went from being rich to being poor no fewer than seventy-three times in the course of his life. Dandalos, better known as Nick the Greek, once lost $600,000 in a poker game, but he was also known to win $500,000 in six months' betting on the horses.

During the 1950s Nick the Greek spent most of his time in Las Vegas, where the news that he would be playing in a certain casino attracted more customers than the nightclub floor show. It was rumored that Dandalos was paid to bring in business, but the gambler, always mysterious about his private life, would never admit it. All anyone knew for certain about Nick the Greek was that he gambled for years, never cheated, and faithfully paid his debts when he lost.

The Las Vegas casino owners were always glad to

see Nick the Greek at their tables. They have been less enthusiastic about one of his successors, a professional gambler named Ken Uston. Uston, a Yale graduate and a former vice-president of the Pacific Coast Stock Exchange, worked out a system that has enabled him to win over a million dollars at blackjack. For a while he was winning so often that armed guards followed him around the casinos to protect him from being robbed.

The casino operators soon decided that Uston was winning too often and barred him from their premises. Uston retaliated by suing eight Las Vegas hotel owners for $85 million for depriving him of his livelihood. The owners claim that he is playing dishonestly. Uston insists that he is using skill, not fraud, to outwit the odds.

Ken Uston is not the first person to work out a system for winning at blackjack. There have been several others. One of them, a mathematics professor named Edward O. Thorp, won the comparatively paltry sum of $2000 in four hours at a Las Vegas club and was immediately invited not to return.

Uston's system is similar to Thorp's. In blackjack, aces and picture cards are highly desirable. Uston keeps track of all the cards that are dealt, then figures out when the high cards are about to come up. To increase his chances of winning, he works with a team of six or eight assistants stationed at other blackjack tables. They signal him if high cards are expected at any of their tables so he can join the game.

Uston and his assistants are quick with figures and

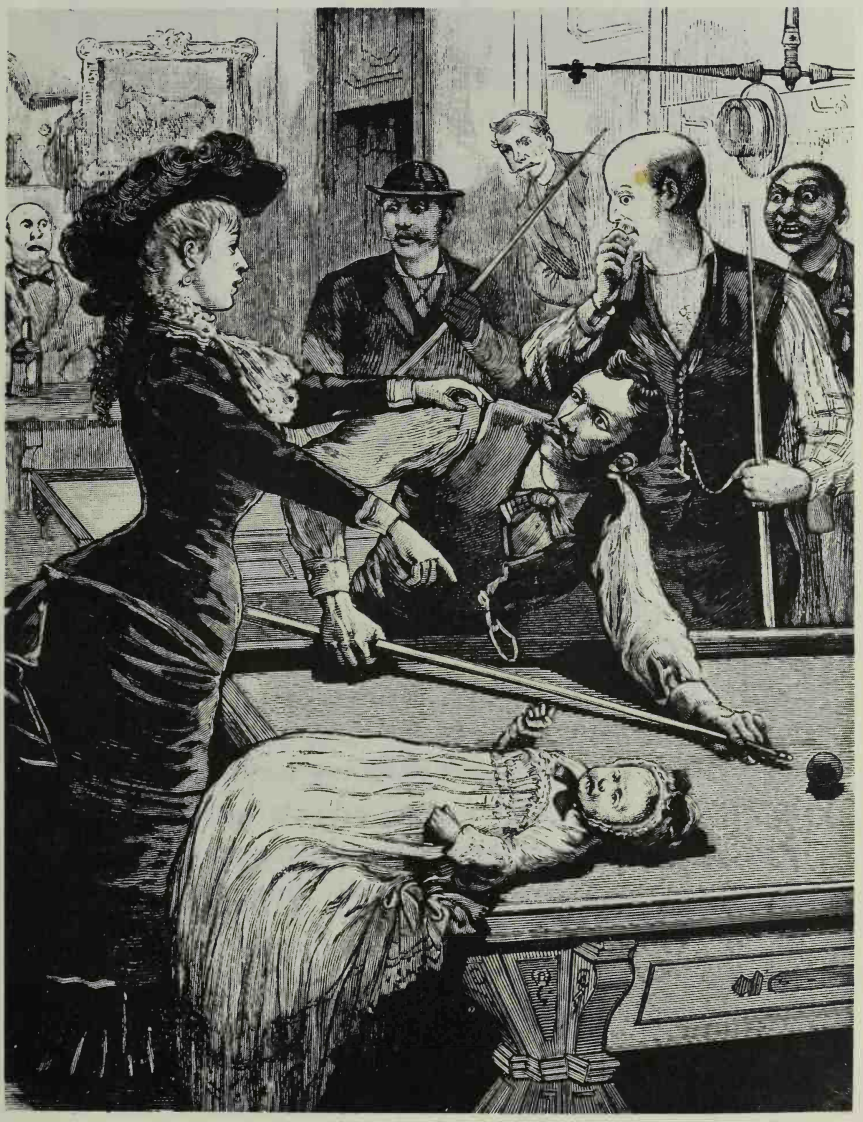
have excellent memories, but the system is not infallible. Not only does he lose occasionally, but his losses are as staggering as his winnings. In one game he gambled away $8000 in less than a minute.

Amateur gamblers are often as obsessed with gambling as professionals. One of the most compulsive gamblers in history was Charles James Fox, who was a leading figure in British politics during the second half of the eighteenth century. Fox started gambling at the age of fourteen when his father, who was also addicted to gambling, took him on a tour of the casinos of Europe and gave him pocketfuls of gold coins to squander at the gaming tables.

Eventually Fox surpassed his father and grew up to become one of the most notorious gamblers in England. He often played hazard all night, went to the House of Commons the next morning, and then spent the afternoon at Newmarket betting on the races.

Like all habitual gamblers, Fox lost more often than he won. His father once spent 140,000 pounds—about $700,000—to settle his gambling debts, but Fox promptly ran up more. In later life he had to be supported by his friends because his own fortune had been gambled away.

Compulsive gamblers like Charles James Fox are not unlike alcoholics. Alcoholics cannot control their addiction to drinking; compulsive gamblers cannot control their urge to gamble. The Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevski is a classic example of the compulsive gambler. Between 1862 and 1872, Dostoyevski was passionately addicted to roulette. For ten years



This nineteenth-century newspaper drawing parodies the consequences of compulsive gambling. The caption reads: "You've played in everything else, play for the baby now; it's yours."

he lived in poverty and was constantly tortured by guilt. He gambled away money that should have gone for food and rent, pawned his possessions, and had to beg for loans from his friends. Every cent was lost at roulette, yet Dostoyevski was unable to stop.

It is commonly believed that, despite all the outward efforts directed toward winning, compulsive gamblers have an unconscious desire to lose. Gambling addicts generally resist treatment. However, one psychiatrist, who has studied a group of them, discovered that the majority began gambling in, or even before, their teens. Unlike other gamblers, they do not regard gambling as a social activity. They prefer to go to a racetrack or casino alone rather than with friends.

Compulsive gamblers, the psychiatrist noted, also tend to be tense and irritable, to suffer from insomnia, and to think about committing suicide. The gamblers come from many different backgrounds and from all levels of society. The overwhelming majority are men but the percentage of women addicts appears to be increasing. The one thing compulsive gamblers have in common is that they constantly think about gambling.

Gambling is a difficult addiction to cure. One of the few methods that has had any degree of success is used by an organization called Gamblers Anonymous. Founded in 1958 by a pair of Los Angeles gamblers who wanted to kick their habit, the organization now has some 450 chapters in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand.

Gamblers Anonymous has the same approach to

Gamblers who won. This newspaper sketch shows the jubilation at the finish line of the Prospect Park Race Track, Brighton Beach, New York, 1885.

addiction as Alcoholics Anonymous. The members talk about their problems with gambling and try to help one another stay away from it. Some of their stories are frightening. One man admitted that he had dug up and sold coffins to get money to gamble. Another told how he stole money from his four-year-old son to bet at the track. Still another confessed, "When I was gambling, my wife could have been home dying fom cancer and I would not have cared less."

Gamblers Anonymous currently has about 5000 members in the United States, but this is only a frac-

tion of the people who need help. Some authorities believe that there are close to one million Americans who cannot control their gambling. Others place the figure as high as four million.

Compulsive gamblers are a danger to themselves and to society, but their numbers are not large enough to warrant a national prohibition on gambling. Even if such a move were possible, it would be unfair to the approximately 148 million gamblers in the United States who are not addicted to the habit. Some of these gamblers may be close to being addicted but many of them gamble only occasionally. Others gamble regularly but in the same way that other people invest their time and money in movies, golf, or stamp collecting. They use gambling as a form of relaxation and amusement and they know—and stay within—their financial limits.

Anyone who gambles must accept the fact that it is not a way to get rich or solve financial problems. The chances of winning can be improved, however, by engaging in games that involve some degree of skill and are not governed solely by chance. A good player in a private game of rummy or bridge stands a better than average chance of winning. In sports events and horse races, a bettor with special knowledge usually has a slight advantage over an uninformed bettor. But slot machines, lotteries, and most forms of casino gambling are games of pure chance.

In addition, any type of gambling that exists to make money does it by penalizing the players. In casinos, for example, the odds are always figured so that the house

has a basic advantage. In government-sponsored gambling, the state takes a larger part of the jackpot than it gives out. In the New York State Lottery, forty-five percent of the money collected from ticket sales goes into the state treasury, fifteen percent goes to cover operating costs, and only forty percent is actually distributed in prizes. In other words, if somebody spent $1 million to buy up all the tickets in the lottery, he or she would win only $400,000.

The gambler who wants to improve his or her chances of winning would do well to study the odds. In a toss of a coin or a bet on a hockey game, the chances of winning are one out of two, or 50–50. In a horse race they may be seven or eight to one. In a game of dice, they jump to thirty-five to one. In a lottery they may be as high as 500,000 to one.

Knowing that the odds are against them rarely stops people from gambling. Few human beings can resist taking a chance at least once in a while. Fewer still can resist hoping that, despite the odds, they will be lucky enough to win something for nothing.

PLAYING WITH TROUBLE

Gambling has never been regarded as a completely desirable habit. The Greeks summed up their attitude in the myth they created to explain its origins: Tyche, the goddess of good luck, was seduced by the chief god, Zeus. The union resulted in the birth of a daughter who grew into a perverse creature. She spent her time inventing games of chance, took malicious pleasure in the quarrels they caused, and delighted in seeing the losers commit suicide.

The Romans were enthusiastic gamblers but they were not unaware of its drawbacks. They considered it an insult to call someone an *aleator* (Latin for gambler), and Roman law consistently favored the losers in games of chance. Losers could sue to recover their losses, for instance, but winners had no legal claim to their winnings.

The supreme legislative council of the ancient Hebrews, the Sanhedrin, refused to allow gamblers to

serve either as judges or as witnesses in court because they might be prone to bribery. In addition, a gambler's winnings under Jewish law were illegal gain. If they were won from a Jew they had to be paid back double; if they were won from a Gentile they did not have to be paid back, but the gambler would still be punished.

The Moslems were even more opposed to gambling. Their book of sacred writings, the Koran, says: "Satan seeketh to sow dissension and hatred among you by means of wine and lots . . . therefore abstain from them."

Even today, gambling is illegal in countries like Afghanistan that follow strict Moslem law. Although it is permitted in Egypt, Egyptian nationals are barred from the casinos and would-be gamblers must produce evidence that they are foreigners.

Over the years, restrictions on gambling have been adopted by practically every country in the world. The tendency has been to outlaw casinos and bookmakers but to permit or even sponsor horse racing and lotteries.

In the United States, where gambling laws are enacted by the individual states, there have always been two schools of thought on the subject. Some states have opposed gambling on religious and moral grounds; others have accepted it as a basically harmless activity occasionally in need of control.

In colonial times, the principal opponents of gambling were the New England Puritans. In 1670 the Massachusetts legislature banned cards and dice as "a

great dishonor to God." To make sure that the law was enforced, the individual towns appointed special agents called tithingmen to check up on people's private lives and make sure they were not wasting their time "in tipling or gaming." The tithingmen were paid out of the fines that were collected for such misbehavior.

Elsewhere in the colonies gambling was regarded as a legitimate source of entertainment and was regulated only when it got out of hand, which from time to time it did. As early as 1624 the Virginia Assembly forbade clergymen from spending their time "idelie by day or night, playing at dice, cards or any unlawful game." In 1652, the burghers of New Amsterdam condemned the playing of *tric-trac* during Sunday services.

The colonies were too small, and the colonists too busy, to have any serious problems with gambling. The trouble started soon after the Revolutionary War. George Washington, who in private life gambled at cards, took a dim view of gambling among his troops. An order issued soon after he became commander-in-chief of the Continental forces forbade "all officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers" from "playing at cards or other games of chance."

The order was widely ignored and had to be repeated at regular intervals all during the Revolution. At one point an exasperated Washington wrote: ". . . the commander in chief in the most pointed and explicit terms forbids ALL officers and soldiers playing at cards, dice or any game except those of EXERCISE for

diversion; being impossible if the practise be allowed at all to discriminate between innocent play for amusement and criminal gaming for pecuniary and sordid purposes."

The problem of "criminal gaming for pecuniary and sordid purposes" did not end with the disbanding of the Continental Army. Not long after George Washington was sworn in as first president of the United States, a large and devious band of swindlers who rigged lotteries, fixed horse races, palmed dice, and cheated at cards invaded the cities and rural areas. As the United States grew larger and richer, the number of swindlers increased. The antigambling laws that many states passed failed to solve the problem and, more often than not, led to still further abuses.

From the very beginning, antigambling laws have been only as effective as the police, the politicians, and the public cared to make them. In many places a combination of political corruption and public apathy led to regular and often flagrant violations of the law. New York is a good example.

In the decades after the Civil War, the city was the pleasure capital of the United States. Most of the pleasures, including gambling, were illegal, yet the locations of the most splendid casinos were well known and they were frequented by some of the most important men in the country.

The authorities in New York had no interest in putting the gambling houses out of business for one simple reason: they were sharing in their profits. Payoffs were made to the police as well as the politicians.

The officer who overlooked gambling violations in his precinct could add several hundred dollars a year to his earnings.

In the early 1890s a police inspector was transferred from a residential precinct to one that included Times Square, which had already become the city's center for crime and vice. The inspector anticipated the transfer with delight. He remarked that he had been eating inferior cuts of beef for much too long and was now going to get a slice of the tenderloin. From that time on the area was known as the Tenderloin.

The proprietors of the gambling houses in the Tenderloin and the police and politicians who protected them were understandably upset when, in 1892, the Reverend Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst took to his pulpit to denounce their activities. Describing New York as "thoroughly rotten," Parkhurst placed the blame for its rottenness on "the Mayor and his whole gang of drunken and lecherous subordinates" who protected and patronized houses of prostitution, gambling dens, and similar illegal establishments.

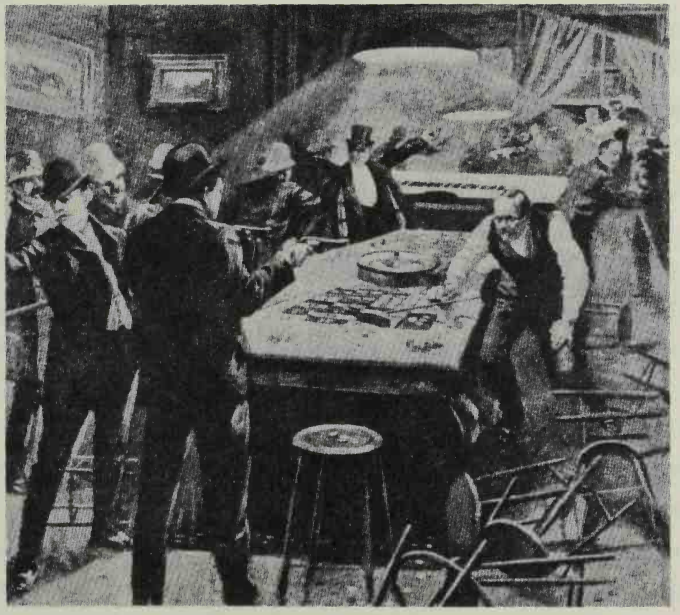
Parkhurst's accusations led to an investigation by a committee of the New York State legislature, headed by State Senator Clarence Lexow. The investigation in turn led to the resignation of several key figures in the city government, including the Tammany boss Richard Croker.

Within three years, however, the Tammany politicians were back in power. It was not until William Travers Jerome, a former attorney for the Lexow Com-

mittee, became Manhattan district attorney that the crackdown on gambling really became effective.

Unfortunately, the cleanup was only temporary. In 1909, three years after Jerome completed his final term as district attorney, illicit gambling was flourishing once more. This fact came to light when New York was rocked by a scandal more sensational than any uncovered by Dr. Parkhurst.

In the summer of 1912, a gambler named Herman Rosenthal was murdered by four gunmen outside a midtown hotel. The murderers were captured and admitted their guilt but they also confessed that they



Manhattan District Attorney William Travers Jerome raiding a gambling house, 1901.

had been hired for the job by a New York police lieutenant named Charles Becker.

Becker and the four hired killers were tried and eventually executed for the murder. In the course of their trials it was established that Becker, who was in charge of a special police squad assigned to suppress gambling, was collecting $10,000 a month to protect Herman Rosenthal's gambling houses from being raided. Becker and Rosenthal had had a falling out and the police officer raided one of the gambler's houses. Rosenthal became so angry that he made a public announcement that Becker was on his payroll. Becker, in revenge, had him killed.

The Becker-Rosenthal case caused a major cleanup in the New York City police department. There was a brief effort at reform before the city returned to gambling—and corruption—as usual. Since then, New York has had two major scandals involving gambling payoffs.

In 1930, Judge Samuel Seabury was appointed by the New York State legislature to investigate political corruption in New York City. Seabury's investigation turned up a number of unholy alliances between politicians and gamblers: one city judge had been a close friend of Arnold Rothstein and had received $20,000 from the gangster shortly before he was shot; illegal bookmakers flourished with no interference from the police; illegal dice and card games operated in political clubhouses, and the operators paid for the privilege with handsome contributions to the Democratic party. The Seabury committee's investigations led to

Lieutenant Charles Becker shown outside the New York State Court of Appeals.

the arrest and conviction of a number of city officials and to the resignation of Mayor James J. Walker in 1932.

In 1950, another Democratic mayor, William O'Dwyer, resigned shortly after his election to a second term. A month later the Brooklyn district attorney announced the arrest of an illegal bookmaker named Harry Gross, who testified that he had paid out more than a million dollars in protection money. Much of it had gone to policemen who were known to be close to Mayor O'Dwyer and some, Gross claimed, had gone to the mayor himself through an intermediary.

O'Dwyer denied any wrongdoing and was never convicted in the scandals, but Harry Gross's disclosures led to the resignation of the O'Dwyer-appointed police commissioner and his chief of detectives and the dismissal of 376 officers.

New York City's story is not unique. It has been repeated in scores of other communities both large and small. The politicians involved have been Republicans

as well as Democrats, and the gangster-gamblers have with increasing frequency been members of the families of organized crime. The extent of their operations is staggering. In 1950 Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee began an investigation of crime in the United States. The Senate committee he headed called over 450 witnesses and discovered that there was a well-organized network of illicit gambling operations protected by payoffs to public officials in Cleveland, Philadelphia, Detroit, Miami, New Orleans, and a score of other cities around the country. The top man in the network was Frank Costello, an influential gambler and racketeer. His associates included Joe Adonis, Meyer Lansky, and Frank Ericson, all familiar names in organized crime.

The Kefauver committee recommended a number of measures to combat illicit gambling and curtail the power of organized crime, but today, more than twenty-five years later, there is no evidence that any of them have been effective. The organized crime families are still heavily involved in illegal gambling at every level, from the lowly numbers racket to the big-time bookmaking operations. They have also built up a lucrative sideline in loansharking—lending money to overextended gamblers at exorbitant interest rates.

In recent years, public attitudes toward gambling have become more relaxed. Many states, looking for ways to raise money without raising taxes, have agreed to permit some type of gambling. Quite a few have gone into the gambling business themselves.

This new trend has led some people to think that

Ex-mayor of New York William O'Dwyer defending his record before the Kefauver Committee. O'Dwyer was called as a witness in January, 1951.

legalized gambling may be the answer to illegal gambling; but so far this has not been true. The advertising and publicity surrounding legalized lotteries, numbers games, and off-track betting has gotten more people interested in gambling. As they become more experienced, they tend to bet their money illegally. Illegal gambling operators can offer gamblers larger winnings and can extend credit, although they have been known to shoot people who don't pay up. But perhaps the biggest advantage they offer is that money won illegally does not have to be reported on income tax returns.

A Cook County, Illinois, sheriff confiscates a slot machine during a 1956 raid on illegal gambling operations in the state.

Winnings in any type of legal gambling cannot be concealed and are taxed at the same rate as other income. The winner of a $1 million lottery, for instance, will collect his or her jackpot in installments of $50,000 a year over twenty years. After taxes are taken out, the sum drops to $30,000 a year, far less than the lucky winner had been led to expect.

Even if legal gambling could successfully compete with illegal gambling, there is still the problem of keeping its operations free from the influence of organized crime. The crime syndicates have tremendous amounts of money at their disposal, and they are experts at evading the law by using apparently respectable people to act as their front men. These front men buy or run hotels, nightclubs, and restaurants. They operate the companies that supply these establishments with liquor, food, and linens and are also involved in manufacturing roulette wheels, slot machines, and gambling tables.

The front men are apt to be lesser members of the crime families who can pass as legitimate businessmen because they do not have criminal records. Many actually are legitimate businessmen whose companies are owned or controlled by organized crime. The criminals' role in the business is so expertly concealed that it is difficult to discover and even more difficult to prove. Despite strict screening procedures by Nevada's state gaming commission, organized crime is thought to have connections with at least five of the twelve biggest casinos in Las Vegas.

The problem of organized crime has persistently

defied solution, but if by some miracle it could be taken out of the gambling picture, some new and unforeseen complication would undoubtedly arise. Gambling has been creating problems of one kind or another ever since it began. The odds are good that it will continue to do so in the future.

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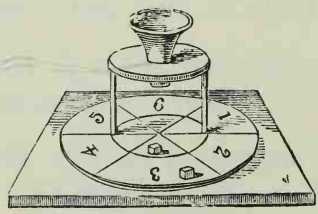

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